



## Political Violence: An Evaluation of Turkey's 1970s And 1990s\*

### Politik Şiddet: Türkiye'nin 1970'li ve 1990'lı Yılları Üzerine Bir Değerlendirme

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#### Abstract

**Purpose:** The aim of this research is to examine the relationship between political violence and political power in Turkey. In this respect, the study focuses on the periods of the 1970s and 1990s, when violence was most intense in Turkish political history.

**Design/Methodology:** Secondary data analysis is carried out in the research, and the equivalent of political violence in the Turkish sample is examined based on the literature on Turkish political life and political theory. In this respect, the violence between the 1970s and the 1990s is qualitatively compared with the comparison method.

**Findings:** As a result of the analyzes, it was concluded that there is a positive relationship between political instabilities and political violence, and it was seen that economic crises and fragile coalitions increased social marginalization and unrest and led to an increase in political violence.

**Limitations:** The sample is limited to the 1970s and 1990s, which are the two periods when political violence was experienced most intensely in the political history of Turkey and the two periods most associated with violence in the literature on political life.

**Originality/Value:** Although political violence is a subject that is studied theoretically and especially based on individual acts of violence, studies of the period as a whole are very limited in terms of violence. However, there is no study in the literature comparing two different historical periods. In this respect, the study has a unique quality and claims to fill a gap in the literature.

**Keywords:** Political Violence, Political Power, Anarchy, Terror

#### Öz

**Amaç:** Bu araştırmanın amacı, politik şiddet ve siyasal iktidar ilişkisinin Türkiye özelinde incelenmesidir. Bu bakımdan çalışma, Türk siyasi tarihinde şiddetin en yoğun olduğu 1970'ler ve 1990'lar dönemlerine odaklanmaktadır.

**Tasarım/Yöntem:** Araştırmada ikincil veri analizi yapılmakta, Türk siyasal yaşamına ve siyaset kuramına ilişkin literatürden yola çıkılarak politik şiddetin Türkiye örneklemindeki karşılığı incelenmektedir. Bu bakımdan karşılaştırma yöntemi ile 1970'li yıllar ve 1990'lı yıllar arasındaki şiddet niteliksel bakımdan mukayese edilmektedir.

**Bulgular:** Analizler sonucunda siyasi istikrarsızlıklar ile politik şiddet arasında bir pozitif ilişki olduğu sonucuna varılmış, ekonomik krizlerin ve kırılan koalisyonların toplumsal ötekileştirmeyi ve huzursuzluğu artırarak politik şiddetin yükselmesine neden olduğu görülmüştür.

**Sınırlılıklar:** Örneklem dönemsel olarak sadece politik şiddet olaylarının Türkiye siyasi tarihinde en yoğun olarak yaşandığı ve siyasal hayata ilişkin literatürde şiddetle en fazla ilişkilendirilen iki dönem olan 1970'li ve 1990'lı yıllarla sınırlanmaktadır.

**Özgünlük/Değer:** Politik şiddet kuramsal olarak ve özellikle tekil şiddet olaylarından hareketle çalışılan konular olmakla birlikte, şiddet özelinde dönem çalışmaları oldukça sınırlıdır. Bununla birlikte, literatürde iki farklı tarihsel periyodu karşılaştırdığı bir çalışma bulunmamaktadır. Bu açıdan çalışma özgün bir nitelik taşımakta, literatürdeki bir boşluğu doldurma iddiası taşımaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Politik Şiddet, Siyasal İktidar, Anarşi, Terör

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Violence is generally evaluated as the excessive use of a certain physical force. Political violence, on the other hand, as a special type of violence, is a special type of violence that has a political-social quality in the relations between the state, society and citizens. Harold Leonard Nieburg defined political violence as follows: “actions that are disruptive, destructive, damaging, aimed at changing the behaviour of others in a compromise situation whose purpose, choice of targets and victims, surrounding conditions, implementation and effects have or may have political significance, that is, consequences for the social system” (Keleş ve Ünsal, 1996). When the political history of Turkey is analysed, the 1970s and 1990s are seen as the most important periods in which political violence came to the fore. What these two historical periods have in common is the presence of unstable coalitions in government, ongoing economic crises and the atmosphere of social polarisation triggered by this environment.

It is seen that the political violent acts of the 1970s were partly formed by right-left conflicts around the polarizations to which the governments of the period were also parties. This period stands out as a period in which ideological factionalization has diversified and the struggle of the working class has also sharpened. In this period, when both nationalist-nationalist and leftist groups actively used the streets, the number of protests increased significantly compared to the previous period and some protests witnessed violent incidents. In the 1970s, the parties of incidents of political violence were determined according to ideological distinctions; the original name of violence in this period was “anarchy”.

By 1990s, a social environment in which the influence of leftist and nationalist groups had declined after the 1980 coup, emerged. In this period, it is seen that political Islam and the Kurdish movement started to rise. In this respect, while the subjects of political actions were mainly workers and students in the 1970s, it was observed that in the 1990s, Kurdish and Islamic groups such as women, mothers, students with headscarves and peasants became politicized. In this period, violent incidents were revealed especially in the actions of Hezbollah and PKK organizations. As in the 1970s, the governments of the periods caused an escalation of political violence in some periods. In the 1990s, political violence was called with the concept of “terror(ism)”, especially based on the actions of radical organizations.

The main claim of the study is that politics cannot be explained without talking about the concept of political violence in the two historical periods discussed. In this respect, the aim of the study is to characterize the violent events of the periods and to evaluate both periods in comparison. With this purpose, the study is structured in three main sections. In the first part of the study, the basic definitions and approaches to political violence are discussed, and in the second and third parts, the incidents of violence in Turkey in the 1970s and 1990s are analysed respectively. In the conclusion section, the nature of the violent incidents in the two periods is evaluated comparatively and the position of these incidents in terms of definitions and approaches to violence is discussed.

## 2. POLITICAL THOUGHTS ON POWER AND VIOLENCE

Under this title, which constitutes the theoretical part of the study, the definitions, approaches and typologies developed in the literature regarding political violence are going to be evaluated. It is possible to trace the origins of political science's interest in political violence back to the 15th century. For example, in the 16th century, which is considered a threshold in the history of political ideas, Nicola Machiavelli (1994) stated, in his work *Prince*, that the ruler who holds political power can resort to violence if necessary. Machiavelli, who used the figures of lions and foxes while describing the ruler metaphorically, recommended that a good ruler should be as cunning as a fox when necessary, as strong as a lion when necessary. Again, if we look at the history of political thought, it will be seen that Thomas Hobbes also affirms politics of power. In Hobbes's (2007) hypothetical approach, in the state of nature where there is no state, chaos will emerge, and war and conflicts will be inevitable in an order where man is the wolf of man. For this reason, people established the state on the basis of a contract and transferred the monopoly of the legitimate use of violence to the government. In the 18th century and onwards, literature, dealing with the state or political power by associating it with legitimate violence, has diversified. One of the most typical examples of these approaches is Max Weber. Weber, who defines the state as “a human community that monopolises the legitimate use of physical violence within

a certain territory”, considers it normal for the state to resort to violence when necessary in order to maintain power (Cited in Vergin, 2018).

In the 20th century, Carl Schmitt (2018) was one of the names who contributed to the approaches that evaluate the relationship between violence and the state from a positive perspective with a contemporary narrative. Schmitt states that power and conflict are the basis of politics, and that the only way to determine whether an event or phenomenon is political is to distinction between friend and enemy. Accordingly, every state has enemies “inside” and “outside”, and politics is shaped by the dynamics that emerge in the conflict between friends and enemies. In this context, in the political levelarising from these moments of conflict, states may clash with each other, as well, different citizen groups within the state may be parties to the conflict.

In the historical period extending from the history of political thought to modern political theory, one name that should be mentioned when dealing with the relationship of violence and power is the contemporary political theorist Giorgio Agamben. Placing the concept of “biopolitics” at the center of his approach, Agamben (2017) argues that the “naked lives” that individuals had before they became citizens of a state were become objects of an order by the state power. Agamben focuses in particular on the unusual moments of exception in politics, when violence peaks. In such periods, governments make the naked lives of citizens the object of politics through the bodies of individuals, and the concept of “bio-politics” becomes the centre of politics. So much so that, the citizens whom the governments characterise as dangerous are excluded from the legal protection area during these extraordinary periods and all kinds of unlawful practices applied on them are considered legitimate (Agamben, 2017). While the relationship between power and violence is legitimised in Schmitt's approach, Agamben does not consider this violence as natural and criticises it. As it can be seen, political science has handled the concept of political violence together with state power for a long time, and discussions have been conducted on the legitimacy of the violence used. Some thinkers have affirmed this violence in the name of maintaining power, while others have criticised the legitimacy of the violence originating from the state. Here, one of the most important points is that the relationship of violence and power, whether it is considered as legitimate or not, is critical to the understanding of political violence.

Taking advantage of the rich legacy left by the history of political thought, political thinkers and theorists developed a number of typologies relating to political violence in the 20th century. The most important issue that draws attention to these contemporary approaches has been the two-way handling of the relationship between the state and violence. The separation of violence from power to the citizen and from citizen communities to violence directed against the state is encountered in almost every approach. Another point to be noted is that political violence is a collective kind of violence. Of course, it may be possible for an individual to commit an act of political violence, but in general, the approaches reveal that political violence involves a collectivity. Again, in the literature, it is seen that political and structural violence are often used as synonyms for each other. However, structural violence is more often used to characterise the actions that the state resorts to in order to maintain its power and shows a single aspect of violence. Aykut Çelebi (2014) characterises structural violence as “a product of the state and sovereign power.” Similarly, Doğu Ergil (2001) points out that this violence is more common in anti-democratic societies by emphasizing the link between structural violence and state power.

The most comprehensive typologies of political violence have been developed by Jean-Claude Chesnais, Fred R. von der Mehden and Yves Michaud. Chesnais divides violence into private and collective violence and categorises political violence under collective violence. He divided collective violence into three parts: violence from citizens to power, violence from power to citizens, that is, violence against society, and wars. Accordingly, while wars refer to interstate relations, the other two classifications evaluate the state both as the perpetrator of violence and as the element to which violence is directed. Chesnais, who exemplifies the violence directed from society to the state as terror, strikes and revolutions, groups the violence applied by the state to the society as power terror and capitalist violence (Özerkmen, 2012; Ünsal, 1996). Artun Ünsal (1996) proposes a new typology of political violence inspired by this typology of Chesnais. First, they divided political violence into group violence and state violence, and then they subclassified in both groups. Accordingly, group violence was examined under subheadings such as the violence of the group against the individual, the violence of the group itself, the violence of the group against the opposite group and the violence of the group

against power. The group's violence against the individual can take the form of terror. The violence that develops within the group itself refers to organizational conflicts. The violence of the group against the other group is conveyed with examples such as showdown between the mafias and tribal fighting. The group's violence against power can develop in environments such as revolution and civil war. The other main heading, state violence, is given under the subheadings of state terror, industrial violence and war. The most striking subheading under this heading is state terrorism, and here human rights violations are encountered the most. Industrial violence is manifested in the improper working conditions and accidents at work, and war is common to other typologies. Another typology of political violence in political literature was developed by Mehden. Mehden examines political violence by dividing it into six, and provides examples for each category. Accordingly, the first type of political violence is violence that originates from the unique culture of the society or the country. This includes acts of violence that involve all kinds of marginalization and hostility in societies. In the third group, the violence unleashed during events such as the military coup, military intervention and memorandum are defined. Fourth, the political actions stemming from the students are enumerated. In the fifth heading of the typology, separatist actions are defined. This is exemplified by violent acts resorted to by groups seeking independence within countries. Finally, the acts of violence that occur during election periods are listed (Keleş and Ünsal, 1996).

Finally, here, Yves Michaud's classification of violence should be evaluated. Michaud (1991), who undertook a detailed categorization in his work *Violence*, handled political violence in five different groups. Accordingly, the first group includes scattered incidents of political social violence; brawls, sudden actions and riots exemplify this category. In the second group, the violence against the government is conveyed with examples of revolution and coup. Third, power violence is accompanied by acts of tyrannical power, intimidation, and terror. In the fourth title, terrorist acts involving radical and radical changes are defined, and in the fifth and final title, civil war events are evaluated.

### 3. POLITICAL VIOLENCE IN TURKEY'S 1970S: ANARCHY

After the theoretical introduction of the study, we will briefly discuss Turkey's pre-1970s before looking at the political conjuncture and acts of violence in the 1970s and 1990s. In fact, throughout the long history of the Republic, different cultural groups have had their share of the violence created by othering processes. In this respect, it is necessary to look for the history of the separation and marginalization between different ethnic groups, political poles and religious identities in the roots of the modernization of the Republic. In almost every period of our history, a concrete manifestation of the understanding of governing has been to invent enemies inside and outside.

It is possible to deal with the cultural history from the early Republican period to the 2020s with a Schmittian perspective. While interpreting the Weimar Constitution during his lifetime, Schmitt added a legal/state dimension to a structural ethno-nationalism. Considering national homogeneity as a necessary prerequisite for political sovereignty, Schmitt was fed from a kinship-based understanding of citizenship by excluding the universal equality and human rights doctrine. Feeding on the principle of "a nation to prove, approve and realize itself in its own way", Schmitt legitimized the doctrine of national independence instead of democracy and human rights (Habermas, 2012). From this perspective of Schmitt, even recalling the debates on how to define Turkishness during the proclamation of the Republic and the early modernization period (Berkes, 2002) is enough to confirm that modern cultural history is a history of marginalization, -inclusion and exclusion-. For example, the policies and practices carried out on Greek, Armenian and Jewish minorities before the 1970s, especially in the 1940s and 1950s, serve the purpose of adopting minorities as an internal enemy. In this respect, Wealth Tax (*Varlık Vergisi*) and the Events of 6/7 September (*6/7 Eylül Olayları*) constitute the most typical examples of othering in the context of violence (Benlisoy, 2015).

However, the most important issue that makes the 1970s and 1990s worth examining is the fact that the violence triggered by othering is experienced in many different groups and the acts of violence are diversified qualitatively and quantitatively. During these periods, cultural groupings, religious divisions, ethnic divisions and ideological polarizations determined the dimensions of acts of violence, and a multiple and destructive spiral of violence emerged. Therefore, it is not possible to discuss these

two periods in a political sense without making reference to the concept of violence. For this purpose, the third part of the study examines the characteristics of violence in the 1970s and 1990s, respectively.

### 3.1. The Political Atmosphere of the 1970s: Coalitions, Memorandums and Street Activism

Turkey's 1970s were a historical period that was between two coup experiences and is often referred to in literature with anarchy events. The concept of anarchy has been a frequently used concept by especially written and visual media organs and political authorities (Sayarı, 2010). Before characterizing the acts of political violence of this period, it is necessary to consider the political conjuncture of the period. The 1970s, like the 1990s, takes a shape in a political atmosphere in which coalitions and governing are fundamental. If we look briefly at the right-wing and left-wing policies of the period, it is seen that the center-right was represented by the Justice Party (*Adalet Partisi-AP*) led by Süleyman Demirel and the Democratic Party (*Demokratik Parti-DP*) led by Ferruh Bozbeyle. In this period when the right was generally strong, the National Vision movement, which was based on an Islamist line, was first represented by the National Order Party (*Milli Nizam Partisi-MNP*) and then by the National Salvation Party (*Milli Selamet Partisi-MSP*) with the closure of this party. The Nationalist Movement Party (*Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi-MHP*), on the other hand, continues to exist and periodically gets closer to other right-wing parties (Koca, 2020). In addition to parties, right-wing politics also makes its influence felt on non-party organisations. The National Turkish Student Union (*Milli Türk Talebe Birlięi*), Akıncılar, Idealist Hearths Association (*Ülkü Ocakları Birlięi*), Idealist Road Association (*Ülkü Yolu Birlięi*), Idealist Young Association (*Ülkü Genç Derneęi*) and the Student organizations, especially the Bozkurt, show that the right is also active in the street (Ozan, 2016; Sayarı, 2010).

The left politics of the 1970s were much more influential on the street, along with being represented in parliament. This period is a period in which the left was represented by different factions, as in the 1960s, and it became mass within a wide area of activism. In the words of Tanıl Bora and İlker Aytürk (2020), "the great hopes and great disappointments of the center-left belong to the 1970s." In this period, the center-left is represented by the Republican People's Party (*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi-CHP*). With Bülent Ecevit's takeover of the chairmanship from İsmet İnönü in 1972, the idea of the middle left, which is the doctrine of the party, has been replaced by the democratic left and the CHP has shifted from the center left to the moderate left (Ozan, 2016). The Republican Trust Party (*Cumhuriyetçi Güven Partisi-CGP*), founded under the leadership of Turhan Feyzioęlu by deputies who were dissatisfied with this leftist tendency, was organised along a more rigid Kemalist line. In this period, the socialist left displays a fragmented structure in terms of both social opposition organisations and party politics. Looking at the parties, it is seen that the left was represented by the Workers' Party of Turkey (*Türkiye İşçi Partisi-TİP*), the Socialist Workers' Party of Turkey (*Türkiye Sosyalist İşçi Partisi-TSİP*), the Socialist Revolution Party (*Sosyalist Devrim Partisi-SDP*), the Labour Party of Turkey (*Türkiye Emekçi Partisi-TEP*), the Workers' and Peasants' Party of Turkey (*Türkiye İşçi Köylü Partisi-TİKP*) and the Vatan Party (*Vatan Partisi*) (Ersan, 2014: 21). The Communist Party of Turkey (*Türkiye Komünist Partisi-TKP*) was not organised in a legal structure during this period (Ozan, 2016: 712). Unlike the leftist organisations of the 1960s, the non-party leftist organisations of the period engaged in more radical struggles and sometimes adopted the armed action style. The People's Liberation Army of Turkey (*Türkiye Halk Kurtuluş Ordusu/THKO*), the People's Liberation Front Party of Turkey (*Türkiye Halk Kurtuluş Partisi-Cephesi/THKP-C*) and the Workers' and Peasants' Liberation Army of Turkey (*Türkiye Komünist Partisi/Marksist-Leninist/TİKKO*) are among the leading organizations engaged in acts of violence (Ozan, 2016). In this period, the separation between the left groups occurred because of the adoption of the lines of different countries in the idea of revolution. In this respect, there are sharp divisions between the 1974-76s between those who embrace the Soviet experience, the Maoists, and the middle-passenger groups who advocate the Latin American experience (Sezer Şanlı, 2020a).

During this period, Turkey was ruled by coalitions and political instability led to an intense increase in street protests. The 1971 military memorandum dealt a heavy blow to the left, and after 1974 the left entered a new recovery process. During this period, violence began during the Erim government, which was the first government of the period and was established after the coup, and continued uninterruptedly until the 1980 coup (Zürcher, 2020). The first act of the Erim government was the prune the libertarian articles of the 1961 constitution. After the Erim I government, which lasted only 5 months,

the Erim II government was formed, which was also not stable. Then Ferit Melen formed a new government, and with his resignation, the Naim Talu government was formed. During this short-lived period of four coalition governments (1971-73), Turkey was exposed to military rule and suffered the pains of transition to civilian politics after the memorandum (Çavdar, 2019).

The first post-memorandum general elections were held in 1973. As a result of a long government crisis, the CHP-MSP Coalition was able to get a vote of confidence in 1974. The life of this coalition was short as a result of the blood discord between different ideological orientations; the Sadi Irmak government ruled the country for four and a half months. This was a time when right-wing parties often accused the CHP and left-wing parties of communism, and all the colors of the right came together under the banner of anti-communism (Ozan, 2016). In 1977, the elections were renewed, the CHP came first in the elections although it could not get a vote of confidence, and in 1977, the Second National Front government was established without the CGP. This period was again a period in which the left did not take part in the parliament, and violence incidents increased during this 5-month government period (Zürcher, 2020). In fact, under the Front governments, right-wing politicians and militants, who saw themselves as the real owners of the state, labelled the left as enemies of the state. Therefore, political violence in the second period of the 70s was fuelled by an atmosphere in which extreme right-wing or extreme left-wing groups wanted to seize public resources and state administration. The winner of this friction was the right-wing parties that excluded the left from parliament (Genç Yılmaz, 2015).

After the fall of the Second Front government, Ecevit formed the new government in 1978, but this government did not last long either. In 1979, the last coalition government of the period was formed as a minority government under the prime ministership of Demirel, and the military seized power in 1980 (Ahmad, 2019). As it can be seen, the politically unstable and highly fragile coalitions of the 1970s led to a crisis of governance, and especially the second phase of the 1970s was recorded as a historical period of intense right-left conflicts. Organisations that thought that the parliament was dysfunctional turned to street activism, and violent conflicts between right and left organisations gained momentum. The anti-democratic environment brought about by the memorandum, the crisis and unrest created by the coalitions in disagreement were also reflected on the streets, and the politics of the 1970s was shaped through the streets. The next section deals with the political violence of the 1970s.

### 3.2. Political Violence Incidents in 1970s Turkey

Violent incidents, which constitute the basic material of the political atmosphere of the 1970s, include both mass and individual actions. The main acts of violence of this period are shaped through conflicts between right-wing and left-wing organisations; it is observed that the governments of the period were frequently involved in these events, and it is even claimed that some state officials supported right-wing militants. These unofficial connections gain meaning especially within the MHP- Idealist Hearts (*Ükü Ocakları*) relationship (Gümrukçü, 2023). The main centre of the politics of the 1970s was not the parliament but the streets. In this period, it is known that students and workers were the main subjects of protests, and the forms of protest of the period were street protests, strikes and occupations (Gümrukçü, 2023).

We are going to cover the violence events of the 1970s under three headings: Right-left conflicts, violence against Alevis and unsolved murders. The kidnapping and murder of Israeli Consul General Elfraim Elrom by THKP-C militants after the formation of the first government in 1971 shows that violence was active in the early 1970s. In 1972, the execution of Deniz Gezmiş, Yusuf Aslan and Hüseyin İnan, the student leaders of the 68 generation, caused the atmosphere to become even more tense (Ozan, 2016). An operation was organized in Kızılder as a result of THKP-C leader Mahir Çayan and a group of his friends kidnapping three technicians, one Canadian and two British, to remove the executions; Along with 10 students, 3 hostages lost their lives (Ozan, 2016; Sayarı, 2010). The first period of the 1970s was shaped within a circle of violence consisting of guerrilla activities of student-militants in the city and countryside (Sayarı, 2010). In the second period, between 1977-80, there was a great increase in acts of violence, and the left, which had been erased from the parliament during the Front governments, turned to armed struggle. While the number of deaths in the conflicts between the poles of different ideologies between 1971-72 was only 60, in 1977 it was 315, in 1978 it was 1095, in 1979 it was 1362, and in 1980 it was recorded as 2206 (Keleş and Ünsal, 1982; Sayarı, 2010). These

conflicts started on university campuses as intellectual conflicts that took their origin from the events of 1968, spread from campuses to different neighborhoods of the city, and then extended to rural guerrilla activities carried out with right and left groups in many regions of Anatolia (Sayarı, 2010).

Just like the first half of the 1970s, conflicts and actions among dissident students during the 1977-80 period became one of the central issues of politics. After the events of 1977, first at Istanbul University and later at a student dormitory in Adana, in 1978, 7 left-wing students at Istanbul University were the victims of a bomb attack (Tombak, 1988). In addition to university campuses and dormitories, coffee houses where right- and left-wing students socialize are another area of violence. In 1978, a leftist coffee house in Balgat, Ankara, was scanned by fire from a vehicle. In the same year, 7 TİP students living in the Bahelievler district of Ankara were killed by raiding their homes (Aydın and Tařkın, 2018). As it can be seen, the political conflicts in which students were at the center of 1977-80 took place in the form of acts of physical violence. In this period, it is estimated that 10,000 female and male students were active members of right-wing, left-wing or Kurdish separatist groups (Sayarı, 2010).

In the 1970s, Alevi also took part in the right-left conflict with their leftist identities (akmak, 2020). During this period, the first act of violence against the Alevi community was committed in Erzincan on 23-24 February 1975. The second act of violence took place in Malatya in 1977, and a similar provocation took place in Sivas in 1978 (Ozan, 2016). The most extensive act of violence took place in Marař province in 1978, and due to the extent of the acts of violence there, the incident went down in political history under the name ‘‘Maras Massacre’’ (*Marař Katliamı*) (Ozan, 2016). The last act of violence against Alevi took place in orum shortly before the coup d'tat. The characteristics of all the organised actions are similar; in all of them, provocations against Alevi are fuelled by discourses such as ‘‘they set mosques on fire’’. Incidents such as the marking of Alevi houses, the destruction of their workplaces and residential buildings, the deaths of many people in the attacks, and attacks on the funerals of the dead people were observed especially in orum and Marař (Dinler, 2020; Sayarı, 2010). The hope of these violent incidents was to eradicate the Alevi community in these cities and turn the provinces into ‘‘liberated areas’’. In this respect, the violent incidents in which Alevi have become targets are the ones in which the right-left conflicts are characterized the most. These events have been also influential in the rise of social polarisation.

The most important act of mass violence of the period, in which ideological conflicts were at the centre, was the workers' holiday in 1977, which went down in political history as ‘‘Bloody May Day’’ (*Kanlı 1 Mayıs*). In an atmosphere of fear created by sound bombs thrown at Taksim Square, bullets raining down on the area and panzers fuelling panic, 36 people lost their lives, some injured and some crushed on Kazancı Slope, in an atmosphere where a mass of more than 200 thousand people celebrated 1 May with enthusiasm. Although the government of the period tried to portray this event as a fractional conflict between two different leftist groups, it became a more frequent thesis in the literature that the Bloody May Day was a deep state operation. For the first time in the history of the Republic, the ‘‘Deep State’’ was pronounced loudly after this incident, and Blent Ecevit pointed to the existence of groups originating from within the state and using state power (Sezer řanlı, 2020a). Both other left-right conflicts and the example of Bloody May Day make it compulsory to place the state (periodically governments) at the centre of the analysis as the source or target of political violence.

In addition to the collective acts of violence discussed so far, the 1970s was a period when influential people from the right and left were become targeted individually. Some of the names of those who fell victim to unsolved murders between 1977-79 are academics Orhan Yavuz, Bedrettin Cmert, Bedri Karafakiođlu, Necdet Bulu, Fikret nsal, Yařar Dođanay, Cavit Orhan Ttengil, Prosecutor Dođan z, Istanbul lk-Bir President Hilmi Sakarya, MHP Istanbul Provincial Chairman Reřat Hařatlı, journalist Abdi İpeki, former DISK President Kemal Trkler, writer İlhan Darendeliođlu, MHP Deputy Chairman Gn Sazak and Nihat Erim, the symbol of the 12 March memorandum (Aydın and Tařkın, 2018; Ozan, 2016). Apart from Erim, all of the sacrificed names are known by their right-wing or left-wing identity and are respected in their own circles. As can be seen, especially the last period of the 1970s has a social environment in which citizens have no safety, streets have become uncanny and the main subject of politics is acts of violence.

#### 4. POLITICAL VIOLENCE İN TURKEY’S 1990S: TERROR

#### 4.1. The Political Atmosphere of the 1990s: Coalitions, 28 February and Identity Politics

Turkey's involvement in the 1990s has been under the shadow of the September 12 coup and the coup regime that consolidated in its aftermath. The term "dark" or "lost" years of Turkish political life is often used for the 1970s and 1990s. However, the nature of the political violence expressed by the darkness differs in two periods. While the violence of the 1970s was caused by ideological polarizations; it developed in the 1990s through identity politics. The 1990s, like its predecessor, the 1970s, witnessed fragile coalitions. The 1990s, just like its predecessor, the 1970s, witnessed fragile coalitions. When it is looked at the party politics of the period, there were dominating parties centred on different currents of thought rather than sharp ideological differentiation as in the 1970s. In this period, the centre-right was represented by the Motherland Party (*Anavatan Partisi-ANAP*) led first by Turgut Özal and then Mesut Yılmaz and the The True Path Party (*Doğru Yol Partisi-DYP*) led first by Süleyman Demirel and then by Tansu Çiller. It is possible to evaluate these parties as a mix of nationalist, conservative and liberal tendencies (Çavuşoğlu, 2010). In the right-wing politics of the period, the national view made a great breakthrough and the Welfare Party (*Refah Partisi-RP*) led by Erbakan achieved great success in both general and local elections. It is possible to evaluate these developments and the rise of political developments together. In this respect, one of the main axes in the thought map of the 1990s composes the conflict of ideas between political Islam and the secular sector that is opposed to it (Saraçoğlu, 2016). In this period, nationalist thought is again represented by the MHP; after the death of the party Alparslan Türkeş in 1997, Bahçeli administration gains a new momentum (Bora, 2017).

In 1990s Turkey, there is a party diversity that has never been seen on the center-left. The center left is represented by Erdal İnönü's Social Democratic People's Party (*Sosyaldemokrat Halkçı Parti-SHP*), Ecevit's Democratic left Party (*Demokratik Sol Parti-DSP*), which was formed by leaving the CHP, and Deniz Baykal's CHP. Just like the RP, we can see the left parties as coalition partners (Bora, 2017). In this respect, the coalitions of the 1990s can be formed by the coming together of parties that are at very different extremes in terms of ideas compared to the coalitions of the 1970s. The 1980 coup dealt a major blow to leftist organisations, and the leftist factions, which constituted one of the most vibrant veins of social opposition, failed to have a major political impact in the 1990s. In this respect, the most effective formation of the period was the Freedom and Solidarity Party (*Özgürlük ve Demokrasi Partisi-ÖDP*), which managed to bring together different components of the left in 1996 (Öngider, 2008).

One line that feeds the intellectual clashes of the 1990s is political Islam and the other is the Kurdish movement. In this period, the Kurdish movement, which started to make politics with its own independent parties and candidates, is represented by many parties that were closed and reopened by changing their names. These parties are the People's Labour Party (*Halkın Emek Partisi-HEP*), the Democracy Party (*Demokrasi Partisi-DEP*), the People's Democracy Party (*Halkın Demokrasi Partisi-HADEP*) (Zürcher, 2020: 146). In addition to legal party politics, one of the parties on the Kurdish question is the PKK. Having carried out its first armed action in 1984, the PKK's terrorist acts in the 1990s became one of the main agendas of politics. Another violent actor of the period was Hezbollah, a radical Islamic terrorist organisation (Yılmaz, 2015).

Looking at the coalitions of the period, it is seen that the first coalition formed as a result of the 1991 elections was the DYP-SHP coalition. After an uninterrupted period of ANAP power from 1983 to the 1991 elections, a new period of coalitions began just like in the 1970s. The first coalition appears to be a fragile union of two different ideological poles, the center-left and the center-right. This coalition was introduced to the society with the right and the left ascribed peace (Akşin, 2020). This coalition, which was dissolved, was once again carried out in 1993 with different general presidents in partnership with the DYP-SHP. Tansu Çiller took over the head of the DYP with the election of Süleyman Demirel as the President, and Murat Karayalçın became the leader of the SHP with the resignation of Erdal İnönü (Saraçoğlu, 2016). After a short DYP-ANAP experiment with the completion of the second coalition, the Rafah-Yard coalition was established in 1996 under the partnership of RP and DYP. The end of this coalition, where political Islam is represented at the highest levels of the state, was February 28. While the 1970s witnessed a memorandum, the 1990s saw a "post-modern" coup, and the coalition dissolved

when the National Security Council (MGK), which convened on 28 February 1997, made Erbakan sign an 18-article package containing measures to be taken against anti-secular actions (Çavdar, 2019). In this process, Erbakan was forced to resign from his post and a closure case was filed against the RP. Unlike the classical military coups in terms of its structure, 28 February is referred to as a post-modern coup in the literature due to its intense support from some segments of the public such as the media and professional chambers. One of the most important outcomes of this process was the beginning of the headscarf ban in universities<sup>3</sup>. This situation has increased the polarization between secular-religious or open-headscarf sections in the society and the right to education of women with headscarves has been taken away from them. Another important political event that developed during this coalition period was the “Susurluk incident”, in which the dirty relations in the state-mafia-politics triangle were publicly exposed (Börklüoğlu, 2019). This event has caused a great outrage in the society, and actions have been organized with the demand for a transparent administration that is not involved in crime<sup>4</sup>.

After the fall of the Refah-yol government, the Democratic Turkey Party (*Demokrat Türkiye Partisi-DTP*), formed by the MPs who broke with the DYP, and the ANASOL-D government, a coalition formed by the ANAP and DSP, were formed. This coalition, which carried out the February 28 resolutions exactly, fell when Mesut Yılmaz submitted his resignation over corruption allegations against him (Ahmad, 2019). The last coalition of the 90s was the DSP-MHP-ANAP coalition, which was formed in 1999 and is known as the tripartite coalition. As can be seen, although the management pattern of the 1990s is similar to the coalitions of the 1970s, it differs in terms of the basic dynamics of social and political life. The 1980 coup partially nullified the ideological polarizations in society and left its place to identity-based polarizations with the post-modernist paradigm in the 1990s. In this respect, in this period, acts of political violence emerged out of the tensions between Turks and Kurds, Alevis and Sunnis, Islamists and secularists. In this period, faith identities and ethnic identities formed the basic mortar of social struggles.

Another unique point of the 1990s is that peaceful protests and acts of civil disobedience entered Turkish political life in this period<sup>5</sup>. The transformation from ideologies to identity politics has caused some groups to change their repertoire of actions, and in this respect, non-violence has become as much a tool of social opposition as acts of violence. Many examples, such as the One Minute Darkness protests in reaction to the Susurluk Incident, are based on a nonviolent opposition style (Tunahan, 2015). Another characteristic of the postmodern period is that activist identities (rightist or leftist), which were very sharp in the 1970s, became invisible in the 1990s. In fact, many citizen groups such as women, students, mothers<sup>6</sup> and peasants, who were not considered as the subjects of politics, became politicised in this period and mostly turned to nonviolent actions. In this respect, although the 1990s was as dark a period as the 1970s, the fact that social reactions could be organised through peaceful means as well as violent actions reveals the unique aspect of the period. This preference to engage in nonviolent actions can be considered as a rational tactic preferred by activists to protect themselves in the violent atmosphere of the period, as well as by the fact that the violence of the 1990s was too intense to be met with violence.

#### 4.2. Political Violence Incidents in 1990s Turkey

The 1990s in Turkey, just like the 1970s, witnessed both individual patterns of violence and different forms of collective violence. Although the 1990s share some commonalities with the 1970s, such as economic crises and unstable coalitions, the spirit of the periods diverges from each other when

<sup>3</sup> Students wearing headscarves organised sit-ins on university campuses in protest against this ban and received mass support. See also Sezer Şanlı, A. ve Coşgun, B. (2020b). Yeni toplumsal hareketlerin yeni aktörleri: 90’lı yıllar Türkiye’inde başörtülü öğrencilerin mücadelesi. *Mukaddime*, 11(2), 382-409.

<sup>4</sup> The protests, which started with the name "One Minute of Darkness for Perpetual Brightness" and the demand for a transparent rule of law, continued in the process as a reaction to 28 February. For these protests organised by citizens as acts of civil disobedience, see also: Sezer Şanlı, A. (2022). Bir yurttaş protestosu olarak sürekli aydınlık için bir dakika karanlık eylemleri. *Pamukkale Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi*, 48, 23-45.

<sup>5</sup> Peaceful protest actions are excluded from the scope of the study as they constitute a separate heading apart from the acts of violence that constitute the problematic of the study.

<sup>6</sup> The movement initiated by the Saturday Mothers against the policy of disappearances under custody became the longest civil disobedience action in Turkey. For detailed information, see: Sezer Şanlı, A. (2018). *Günlük hayatın dönüşümünde bir imkân olarak toplumsal muhalefetin değerlendirilmesi: Cumartesi anneleri üzerine bir araştırma*. (Yayınlanmamış Doktora Tezi). Hacettepe Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Ankara.

the incidents of political violence are analysed, and the dynamics of social polarisation that fuelled violence differ. While the violent acts of the 1970s are referred to as anarchy, the acts of violence in the 1990s are conceptualised with the term terrorism. The two main sources of terrorism in this period are political Islam, which constitutes the political spirit of the 1990s, and the radical organisations Hezbollah and PKK, which are associated with the Kurdish movement. In this respect, many studies have shown that the 1990s have removed the 1970s as a fundamental reference in terms of political violence; it is described as a much darker period (Uysal, 2016). Many sources includes the claim that the anti-democratic articles in the 1982 constitution legitimised the polarisation and violence of this period. Although some articles of the constitution were amended in 1973 after the 1971 memorandum and a basis for an authoritarian regime was established, the 1982 constitution was built on a much more antidemocratic basis in spirit. Therefore, when the constitutional basis of the two periods is analysed, the more radical form of violence in the 1990s becomes more understandable (Ortaylı, 2011).

We are going to analyse the violent events of the 1990s under four different headings: PKK and Hezbollah terrorism, human rights violations in the Southeastern provinces, violence against Alevis and unsolved murders. In the 1990s, the state appears to be an actor at the centre of political violence, just as it was in the 1970s. The state sometimes appears as a direct source of violence and sometimes as an organisation towards which violence is directed. The fact that the governments of the 1990s perceived the Kurdish problem as a security problem rather than a sociological problem and that the governments left the solution of the problem to the Turkish armed forces paved the way for the intense emergence of violence (Yılmaz, 2015). During this period, the PKK carried out intensive terrorist activities and became a direct source of violence. Looking at the period between 1984-1997, it is seen that 29,487 people lost their lives, 4329 of whom were security officers, 4276 of whom were civilians and 20,882 of whom were members of the organisation (Kongar, 2018).

While the armed struggle of the army against the organisation continued, the Southeastern provinces also experienced intense human rights violations. In this respect, it is seen that human rights violations in the region, which occur in different patterns of political violence, are a result of the policies of the governments. The implementation of many practices such as unsolved murders, torture, evacuation of villages and exodus, and loss in detention in parallel with the armed struggle has created a victimization on civilian citizens (Human Rights Association Report, 2021). As a result of the 1990 intensive operation of the village guard system started in 1985, it is seen that the PKK has declared the village rangers as collaborators. Therefore, the civilian population in the region was caught between the state and the organisation and was subjected to intense violence (Aydın and Taşkın, 2018). Another grievance was the strategy of evacuating villages in order to clear the organisation from rural areas, and thousands of people were subjected to forced migration. It is estimated that approximately 3000 villages were evacuated in the period extending until 1996 (Yılmaz, 2015; Zürcher, 2020).

It is claimed in many studies that Hezbollah, another influential organization of the time, was heavily supported by the deep state in its struggle for supremacy with the PKK (Saraçoğlu, 2016). Hezbollah, a fundamentalist organization that defends radical Islam, has existed in Southeast Anatolian provinces just like the PKK and has engaged in political activities. Hezbollah has declared itself an Islamic organization, claiming that the PKK has a claim to establish an atheist social order (Karmon, 1998). During this period, Hezbollah has been heavily involved in terrorist incidents, especially associated with unsolved killings directed at the intellectuals of the secular sector. The discovery of the tortured body of Islamist writer Konca Kuriş in 1998 in a Hezbollah cell house after days of searches, and the execution of Diyarbakır Police Chief Gaffar Okkan in 2001 are some of the terrorist acts committed (Saraçoğlu, 2016). When we evaluate the 1990s so far, we see that all forms of violence are more intertwined than in the period of the 1970s. For example, Hezbollah's actions both lead to collective terrorism and some of the names it targets are associated with the category of unsolved murders. The governments of the period, especially while fighting against PKK terrorism, indirectly led to human rights violations on civilian citizens.

The only form of violence in the 1990s that can be seen as a similar continuation of the 1970s is violence directed at Alevis. Although the Alevis, who were parties to the right-left conflict in the 1970s, experienced an identity awakening in the 1990s, the practices of incitement and marginalization applied on the Alevi community show similarity in both periods. . In this period, two events that

exemplify the violence against Alevis were the “Madımak” and “Gazi” Incidents. In July 1993, 33 people were burned to death as a result of the fire in the hotel where intellectuals from different professional groups who came to the city within the scope of Pir Sultan Abdal cultural festivals were staying (Ertan, 2016). A similar provocation took place in March 1995 in the Gazi neighborhood of Istanbul, where Alevi citizens lived intensively, and businesses belonging to Alevis were ransacked. Three days of incidents clashed with the police, 3. At the end of the day, things were brought under control. 23 people lost their lives in the clashes (Yılmaz, 2015).

Another point where political violence in the 1970s and 1990s showed continuity is the unsolved murders. In this context, there has been a differentiation in the identities of the individuals who became victims of violence. In the 1970s, those who were assassinated were influential figures on the right or the left, whereas in the 1990s, the victims of this violence were Kurdish opinion leaders and secular intellectuals. The murder of Muammer Aksoy caused the terror stemming from radical Islam to be discussed intensively in the public opinion for the first time (Karmon, 1998). This murder was followed by the murders of etin Eme, Bahriye ok, Uęur Mumcu, Onat Kutlar and Ahmet Taner Kışlalı, and these assassinations caused indignation in the secular sector (Saraoęlu, 2016). The murder of Gaffar Okkan aimed the arrows directly at Hezbollah. In this period, the murders of Musa Anter, one of the leading intellectuals of the Kurdish society, and Vedat Aydın, the provincial chairman of HEP Diyarbakır, increased the polarization in the society (Yavařa, 2013). These murders have further deepened the Alevi-Sunni, Turkish-Kurdish, religious-secular divisions in society.

## 5. CONCLUSION

In this study, which aims to compare the political dimensions of the violent events in Turkey in the 1970s and 1990s with the differences and similarities between the two periods, theoretical approaches that deal with political violence theoretically are based on. Revealing similar points before evaluating the specific points of both periods will constitute a functional starting point.

In both periods, which are considered to be Turkey’s “dark years,” governments seem to be made up of fragile coalitions. Although it is not possible to establish a direct cause-and-effect relationship between coalitions and the escalation of political violence, it is seen that these unstable coalitions seem to be inadequate in combating political violence. Some of the coalitions of the 1970s were organised as technocratic-military governments, and four different civilian governments were formed during this period. In the 1990s, on the other hand, there was no military government and there were six different coalitions. In the coalitions of the 1990s, the convergence of different ideological poles is more evident. The previous period, on the other hand, consists of unions of intellectually close parties, as seen in the example of the Front Governments.

In both periods, it is seen that the military was in close relationship with politics, and this situation became overt in the cases of the 1971 memorandum and the 28 February coup. Although there were differences between the two coups, in both periods politics was conducted under the shadow of the military. Another commonality between the two eras is the increasingly authoritarian spirit of constitutions. After the 1971 memorandum, significant changes were made to the libertarian 1961 constitution, and these authoritarian steps increased the pressure on the opposition. The 1990s, on the other hand, as a period in which the 1982 constitution, whose anti-democratic nature is not disputed, was in force, was a period in which the pressure on the subjects of social opposition was much more pronounced.

When the sociological structure of the two periods is examined, the dimensions of social polarisation, which is another similarity, come to the fore. It is observed that social unrest, marginalisation and polarisation increase the incidents of violence. Although the targets of polarisation differed in the 1970s under the title of “anarchy and right-left conflicts” and in the 1990s under the title of “terrorism and identity conflicts”, the lives of dissidents were transformed into “naked lives” by the sovereign powers in Agamben’s words, and those who thought differently were marginalised. From another point of view, identities that went out of the comfort zone of power were turned into “internal enemies” in Schmitt’s conceptualisation. In both periods when intellectual conflicts were accompanied by acts of violence, unsolved murders continued and the identities of the victims targeted in these murders reveal the dimensions of otherisation.

Despite the many commonalities between the 1970s and the 1990s, the spirit of both periods is quite different from each other. The differentiation of the subjects of social opposition and the repertoire of actions used by these subjects reveals the changing political atmosphere. Starting from the 1970s, it is seen that the opposition was structured in more rigid forms such as rigid organisations and organisational discipline and armed struggle. It is seen that the violent incidents of this period were structured within a pendulum from society to power and from power to society, which is characterised by the structural elements of collective violence, as Chesnais and, inspired by him, Artun's approach. As seen in the Idealist Hearts example, the support of right-wing militants, especially from the Front Government, is known, and the deep state debates during the Bloody May Day are again examples of state-sponsored violence. It is seen that the violent incidents of this period were structured within a pendulum from society to power and from power to society, which is characterised by the structural elements of collective violence, as Chesnais and, inspired by him, Artun's approach. On the other hand, based on the armed rural and urban struggles of the hard left factions, it is clear that violence was directed from the society to the state with the idea of revolution. The four items of Mehden's typology directly explain the political violence of the 1970s. The unique culture of the society and the dynamics of enmity are reflected in the term "anarchic" under the heading of anti-communism, revolutionary and counter-revolutionary violence explains the relationship between the government and the opposition, and the actions originating from the military are seen in the 1971 memorandum. Another category of Mehden's, political actions arising from students, gains meaning within right-left conflicts. Michaud's approach, on the other hand, shows that violent incidents sometimes include dispersed violent incidents such as brawls and sudden actions as seen in the student protests, and in the case of Bloody May Day, they are included in organised violence under the heading of intimidation and tyrannical power. As it can be seen, the political atmosphere of the 1970s was shaped by rigid political organisations and the active forms of action determined by them in an environment of ideological polarisation, and violent incidents developed bidirectionally between the state and society.

The 1990s, on the other hand, are shaped in a different political spirit in which violent and peaceful forms of action coexist. The acts of violence of this period, in line with Ünsal's approach, also include the actions of individuals and groups against the state and the violence directed from the governments to the citizens in a bidirectional manner. In the acts of violence of the 1990s, from the perspective of Chesnais's approach, we observe the terrorism directed from society to the state in the examples of PKK and Hezbollah, while the violence directed from the state to society is seen in the human rights violations especially in the Southeast. In terms of Mehden's typology, the subjects of internal enmity dynamics in this period are sometimes Islamists, sometimes secular figures and Kurds. In this period, which also saw the formation of a military coup, it is not observed that 28 February directly led to an incident of violence; however, as in the case of students wearing headscarves, it had outcomes that damaged social peace and tranquility. However, the category of radical separatist actions in Mehden's typology is a heading that did not exist in the 1970s but manifested itself with intense terrorist incidents in the 1990s. This item is explanatory in the case of PKK terrorism. Again, unsolved murders can be read as an output of enmity within the periodic continuity. These assassinations and the Madımak Incident can be evaluated in Michaud's category of disorganised violence. On the other hand, the organised actions of the PKK and Hezbollah gain meaning under the heading of terrorism. As can be seen, political violence constitutes a concept of central importance in order to comprehend the politics and social structure of the 1970s and 1990s. Just as it is not possible to explain the sustainability or unsustainability of the governments of the period without resorting to the concept of political violence, it is also not possible to comprehend the relationship between citizen-society-state without discussing the relationship between social polarisation and violence.

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