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POLITICAL ISLAM AND GRASSROOTS

ACTIVISM IN TURKEY

A STUDY OF THE PRO-ISLAMIST VIRTUE PARTY'S GRASSROOTS ACTIVISTS AND THEIR AFFECTS ON THE ELECTORAL OUTCOMES

By

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Eliot College

**A Thesis Submitted For The Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
(PhD) at The University of Kent at Canterbury, Department**

of Sociology,

December, 2001

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am deeply grateful to my supervisor Professor Frank Füredi without whose generosity with his time, assuring trust in me, invaluable comments, guidance, encouragement and above all patience this thesis would not have been completed

I would like to thank to the Higher Educational Council and Adnan Menderes University in Turkey for their initial grant that enabled me to come to UK for my postgraduate studies and later allowing me to carry out my PhD in the UKC. I am particularly thankful to Prof. Timur Döken, Prof. Abdullah Yayla, Prof. Halil Çivi Doç. Dr. Hatice Kandehir, Doç. Dr. Kurtuluş Olgun, and many others for their support during my study.

I would like to state my thanks to many in the School of Social Policy, Sociology and Social Research for their support and understanding over the years particularly to Anne Phillips, Prof. Chris Pickvance, David Morgan, and Prof. Larry Ray. Many thanks to Allcorn/Box Fund for their generous financial support. I am, also, grateful to many in the Department of Anthropology, chiefly Emeritus Professor Paul Stirling who is sadly not with us any more for his great friendship care and guidance and unlimited help especially in the first years of my study. Thanks to Dr. Mike Fischer for his support with computing problems.

I have enjoyed friendship of and stimulation from our discussions with Tarık, and Steve who has also read some of manuscript. I owe a big special thanks to Sean who meticulously read the whole manuscript. Over the years, I have met and enjoyed friendship of many friends from all over the world in Canterbury- Adam, Akın, Angela, Chris, Elmas, Elvira, Fulya, John, Junko, Karl, Matthew, Necmettin, Nihan, Tracey, Turan, Vedat, Yumiko and many others I would like to thank to all.

I am most grateful to my wife Yeter and daughters Emek Gökçe Fidan and Ekin Gül without whose generous support, encouragement, patience, energy and loving care over the years this thesis would not have been finished. I would like to state my greatest thanks to my parents, brother and sisters who always encouraged and trusted me.

ABSTRACT

This thesis presents an analysis of the spectacular rise of political Islam in Turkey. It has two aims: first to understand the underlying causes of the rise of the Welfare Party which –later became the Virtue Party- throughout the 1990s, and second to analyse how grassroots activism influenced this process.

The thesis reviews the previous literature on the Islamic fundamentalist movements, political parties, political party systems and concentrates on the local party organisations and their effects on the party's electoral performance. It questions the categorisation of Islamic fundamentalism as an appropriate label for this movement. An exploration of such movements is particularly important in light of the event of 11th September. After exploring existing theoretical and case studies into political Islam and party activism, I present my qualitative case study. I have used ethnographic methodology, and done participatory observations among grassroots activists in Ankara's two sub-districts covering 105 neighbourhoods.

I examined the Turkish party system and the reasons for its collapse. It was observed that as a result of party fragmentation, electoral volatility and organisational decline and decline in the party identification among the citizens the Turkish party system has declined. However, the WP/VP profited from this trend enormously and emerged as the main beneficiary of this process. Empirical data is analysed in four chapters, dealing with the different aspects of the Virtue Party's local organisations and grassroots activists. They deal with change and continuity in the party, the patterns of participation, the routes and motives for becoming a party activist, the profile of party activists and the local party organisations. I explore what they do and how they do it.

The analysis reveals that the categorisation of Islamic fundamentalism is misplaced and the rise of political Islam in Turkey cannot be explained as religious revivalism or the rise of Islamic fundamentalism. It is a political force that drives its strength from the urban poor which has been harshly affected by the IMF directed neoliberal economy policies. In conclusion it is shown that the WP/VP's electoral chances were significantly improved by its very efficient and effective party organisations, and highly committed grassroots activists.

CHAPTER ONE

POLITICAL ISLAM IN TURKEY: GRASSROOTS ACTIVISTS AND THEIR AFFECTS ON THE RISE OF THE WP/VP IN THE 1990s

1.1 Introduction

The aim of this study is two-fold, first of all, to grasp what were the underlying causes of the unprecedented rise of political Islam in Turkey throughout the 1990s. In other words to throw light onto why and how the pro-Islamist Welfare Party tripled its share of votes between 1987 and 1995 from 7 % to 21 % at general elections. And secondly to find out what are the effects of grassroots organisations and activism on the WP/VPs unprecedented electoral success in the 1990s.

There is no doubt that one of the most important developments of the 1990s is the emergence of fundamentalist movements around the world. As expected Turkey, a predominantly Muslim country has not been an exception to this religious revivalist trend. Since the early 1980s political Islam had an increasingly influential role in socio-economic, political and cultural life (Ayata, 1993, p. 65). It seems that this revival of Islamic fundamentalism will change Turkish society in the near future (Şaylan, 1992 p.127). In fact all of this development contradicted all predictions of the modernist, secularist paradigm that envisaged secularisation as imminent and the role of religion in politics diminished forever. What was more mysterious for many was that political Islam became one of the main political forces in Turkey despite one and a half centuries of modernisation, westernisation, and strictly guided secularisation policies.

The pro-Islamist Refah (Welfare) party (WP) become the biggest mass political party within a relatively short period. The Welfare party increased its share of the vote from

9.8 percent in 1989 to 19.1 percent in the 1994 local elections, a turning point in Turkish political history. For the first time in over seventy years of the secular republic, many of Turkey's major cities including Istanbul and Ankara the capital of the secularist republic faced the reality of having Islamist mayors. This was a devastating shock for the militant secularist elites -chiefly the military and bureaucratic elite- liberals, social democrats, westernised strata of society, and minority Alevi population.

It created a siege atmosphere for modernized, westernised and secular strata of the Turkish society. They felt threatened by Islamic fundamentalism, which is often coupled with 'extremism' 'irrationality', 'intolerant' and 'religious bigotry'. Some argued for an immediate segregation of men and women in the public sphere and the confinement of women in the home. Others saw the rise of the WP as heralding an approaching *irtica* (Sharia) while others were concerned about the loss of freedom, democracy, and respect for human rights as if they really existed at all.

The fear and anxiety took the wildest forms. Soon, there were media reports of incidences where young women being assaulted verbally or physically. Women who wore short skirts or jeans had their flesh slashed, some others were bitten for similar reasons.

In the meantime it led to a very significant development in the opposite camp as well. The official ideology made tremendous gains by capitalising on this widespread fear and anxiety. The unprecedented election results in 1994 and 1995 of the WP contributed significantly to the startling revival of Kemalism, the official ideology of republic. After decades of decline in popularity it made a come back to haunt its historical enemy beaten to death at the turn of 20th century.

The results of the general elections held one year later on 24th December 1995 showed that the Refah's success increasingly continued. The WP attained 21.4 per cent of total the vote and gained more seats (158 out of 550) than any mainstream secularist parties.¹ This time the general election heightened the tension between *laicists* (secularists) and Islamists (fundamentalists) to a degree where the Islamic led

¹ Seçim Sonuçları 24. 12.1995 – Results of Elections of Representatives- State Institute of Statistics, Printing Division, November 1996, Ankara

government was forced to resign after just 11 months in office. However, the resignation of Necmettin Erbakan, the leader of the WP following what some commentators has been called a postmodern coup in 28 February 1997, was not the end but the beginning of another chapter in a long and exhausting battle between secularist military and bureaucratic elites and the Islamic WP.² Not only was the Welfare the largest party in the country being closed down by the supreme court its leader Necmettin Erbakan and six other MPs were banned from politics.

In response to the rise of political Islam, the military elite that dominated the National Security Council, needed to redefine its 'security concept'. After fifteen years fighting the PKK, political Islam was elevated to the number one internal threat to the secularist republic. Since then virtually all of the monthly NSC meetings, designated the *Şeriat tehdidi* – the threat of Islamic fundamentalism-assess the latest *irticai* – fundamentalist- activities of various Islamic groups, and action plans for the eradication of them. 'If necessary, our fight against the fundamentalist threat will continue one thousand year' declared one of the leading general in the army.³ The process of 28 February continues. It has laid the foundations of the pacification of political Islam. Leading figures such as N. Erbakan the creator and leader of the Welfare party, Tayyip Erdogan the ex-mayor of Istanbul (for many the future leader of political Islam), S. Kazan, H. Mezarci, Sukru Karatepe ex-mayor of Kayseri, and many others have been banned from politics.

In addition to internal concerns, the rise of political Islam in Turkey caused a considerable degree of concern in the capital cities of Turkey's Western allies. New York Times journalist John Darnton (1995) wrote:

For years a strategic ally in the containment of Soviet Communism, Turkey has now become a bulwark against dictators, terrorists and Islamic radicals... Now, with conflicts multiplying in Azerbaijan and elsewhere, the east conjures up danger as well as riches. Turkey is recasting itself as a buffer state and as a bulwark, only this time against revolutionary Islam.

² For the term 'postmodern coup' see daily Radikal, 15 Ocak 2001, '*Özkanak: 28 Şubat post modern darbeydi (Özkanak: 28 February was postmodern coup)*' (15 January 2001).

³ See Milliyet, 29 June 2000, 'Komutandan Savaş Uyarısı' (Warning of War from Commandant) and 30-06-2000 'Askerden İkinci Çıkış' (Military's Second Warning).

After noting Turkey's strategic position during the Cold War as a buffer state against Soviet Communism he points out the new threat to the West by referring to Willy Claes' (ex-secretary general of NATO) comment that "fundamentalism posed as big a threat to the West as Communism once did."⁴ There is nothing new in Willy Claes' point of view. It has been widely shared by many influential Western intellectuals but the importance of his view comes when NATO is taken into account. When NATO began to view Islamic fundamentalism as the biggest threat to the West, Turkey, as one of the key NATO members, had a new role as a buffer state against Political Islam. Richard Holbrooke (Assistant Secretary of State at that time), another high-ranking diplomat in the US administration in the 1990's, assessed the regional situation as "the most volatile portion of the world today." And then he added "We haven't paid enough attention to Turkey".⁵ Returning to the situation in Turkey Darnton argued that: "The fundamentalist rise is already very real. The Welfare Party, a militant Islamic group, has taken control of local governments in Ankara, Istanbul and other municipalities".

In this article Darnton highlights three important points: first, Islamic fundamentalism is the new threat to the West, second, Turkey as a bulwark was and will continue to be crucial for the Western interests and thirdly Islamic fundamentalism is a real threat in Turkey. Therefore it is a security concern for the west as well.

Why is the rise of political Islam so important? First of all, the embedded tension between the modernist, secularist elite representing the 'centre' and anti-secular Islamic groups represent the 'periphery'. Turkey is a predominantly Muslim country established from the ruins of the Ottoman Empire in 1923 as a modern and secular republic. The Turkish revolution led by modernist, secularist elites changed everything from the alphabet to the dress code. The most challenging task was the abolishment of the Sultanate and Caliphate, the supreme religious authority of Islam. This was a daunting task opposed by the conservative religious elite and various sections of society. Since the 1920s the secularist elite have always seen Islam as a major obstacle to Turkey's modernisation and a serious threat to political authority (Toprak, 1987, p. 218; see also Göle 2000, pp. 63-64).

⁴ Quoted in Dranton, 1995.

⁵ See *ibid.*

The importance of the rise of political Islam in Turkey partly comes from the nature of the main political cleavage in Turkey. Mardin, Ş (1973, pp.169-191) argued that: “centre-periphery” relations provide a good explanatory scheme to comprehend Turkish politics.” Nur Yalman points out that during the ‘beneficent period of 1838-1877, Ottoman society was divided into two *kulturkampfs*. (1973, p.152). This duality continued until the 1960s. Since then there have been new elements added to the equation like class and ethnic dimensions. But the divide of secular/anti-secular is still one of the most important aspects of the Turkish polity. For this reason the unprecedented rise of political Islam has caused sharp polarisation, a deep political crisis, widespread panic, anxiety and fear as well as escalating the tension between the modernist secularists and the Islamists camps in Turkey. ⁶

In many ways no other problem, since the 1920s, has challenged the Turkish secular establishment as political Islam has done. The Kurdish nationalist movement from 1984 is perhaps the only other fundamental challenge that Turkey faced throughout the 1990s.

Throughout the 1990s the sudden rise of religious movements in general and political Islam in particular was one of the most commonly discussed subjects in the mass media and various academic disciplines. (Sidahmed, and Ehteshami 1996, p. 2; Munson, 1995, pp. 151-166; Benin and Stork, 1997, p. 8). This extraordinary interest is on the one hand due to dramatic changes that came about with the end of Cold War and the proclamation of the New World Order. The collapse of the former socialist bloc and the diminishment of its mighty military machinery left the US as the single Super Power. This was a major shift in the international politics, a power vacuum that had to be filled. In this historical conjunction Islam, with its one billion adherents spread out across the globe, appeared to constitute the most pervasive and powerful transactional force in the world (Esposito, 1995, 4). On the other hand, there has been an increasing politicisation of Islam as an assertive alternative politics across the

⁶ Following the WP’s electoral success in general elections in 1995 there was an atmosphere of widespread anxiety and fear. This was reflected by several commentators and news articles. See: Atabek, 1996 “*Refah Sendromunu Aşmak...*” (Overcoming the Syndrome of Welfare), Istanbul Daily Cumhuriyet 8 January 1996; Ateş, 1996 “*Refah Korkusu*” (Fear of Welfare), Cumhuriyet 4 January 1996; Çetinkaya, 1996 “*RP den Korkulurmu*” (Should we Scared of WP), Istanbul daily Cumhuriyet 30 January 1996.

Muslim world. Furthermore there have been a series of events, such as attacks on Western embassies, hijackings and hostage takings, and violent acts by some Islamist groups. Most importantly the bombing of the World Trade Centre in 1993 and the very latest unprecedented terrorist attacks and collapse of the New York's World Trade Centre and part of Pentagon by three airplane crashes has triggered massive media attention of Islamic fundamentalism.⁷

However the rise of political Islam cannot be investigated in isolation as a regional or localised phenomenon because it is closely connected with the political and socio-economic developments taking place on a global scale (Bina C, 1994, p. 3). This is true in the case of the WP in Turkey as well. The rise of the WP/VP from a movement to a mass political party has been closely connected with globalisation of neoliberal economy policies and the implementation of restructuring policies of the IMF and the World Bank in Turkey.

1.2 Problems With the Categorisation of Islamic Fundamentalism

The categorisation of political Islam as Islamic fundamentalism has been, by and large, one of the results of the end of Cold War. Is there a new phenomenon called fundamentalism or rather a shift in sociology's conceptualisation? It appears that the conceptualisation of fundamentalism has been heavily influenced by the discourse of the New World Order, a socio-political trend that dominated the 1990s. Many of these extremist forms of politics today called fundamentalism could have been called extremism, fanaticism, Buddhism, or Islamism in the past but today are called fundamentalism only because of ideological shifts taking place on a global scale. The proclamation of 'the end of history' and claims about 'the universalisation of western liberal democracy as the final form of human government' explicitly excluded many non-liberal or non-western ideologies and government types.⁸ It is this presumption that allowed the labelling of non-western or non-liberal politics or ideologies as fundamentalist.

⁷ Esposito, J 1995: 4; See also "A declaration of war" The Guardian 12 Sep. 2001.

⁸ See Fukuyama, 1989, pp. 3-18 and Fukuyama, 1992, p. 66.

Like many other sociological concepts, the concept of fundamentalism has been rather problematic. Its application to Islam has generated wide criticism among scholars. It is argued that the concept of fundamentalism is neither descriptive nor explanatory. (Campo, 1995, p.167-194). The concept originated with the American Protestant fundamentalist movement that emerged in the 1920s. Fred Halliday (1995b, p.399) points out that there are some problems with applying the term 'fundamentalism' to Muslim movements. Also, Nikki Keddie (1986, cited in Halliday 1995b, p. 399) suggested that 'Islamist' instead of 'Islamic fundamentalist' is probably the most accurate concept for this movement'.

The discourses of Islamic fundamentalism are diverse. The most permanent discourses shaped by Western commentators tend to view these socio-political movements as religiously fanatic groups with a unique and rigid agenda of restoring a seventh century type Islamic society in the twenty first century.

Political Islam is often regarded as a major threat to the stability of the Middle East, and therefore, to Western interests in the region (Esposito, 1995, p.4). For some writers like Huntington (1994) and Lewis (1990) Islamic fundamentalism is a threat to Western interests and civilisation. It is the Green Menace that replaced the Red Menace of the Cold War area.⁹

The discourse of political Islam among Western commentators and academics has some parallels with the discourse of political Islam in Turkey. The one exception is the emphasis given to secularism/anti-secularism and modernity/anti-modernity, which are well-known elements of western discourse. In fact the vast majority of the debate revolves around the threat of Islamic fundamentalism, as in the West, to the modern, secular, democratic republic and the principles of Ataturk. (See Çetinkaya, 1996, p. 80; Ekşi, 1995, p. 9; Kongar, 2000, p.40).

Furthermore, "Islamic fundamentalism" for many scholars is equated with "terrorism", "extremism", "intolerance", "irrationality", "the Green Menace" etc. (See

⁹ Esposito, 1995, p. 5.

Huntington, 1994, pp. 22 - 49; Lewis, 1990, pp. 47 - 60; Miller, 1993, pp. 43 - 56; Munson, 1995, pp.151 - 166). These claims are not all unjustified exaggeration or accusations and the product of imaginative minds of external/western observers. It is true that Islamic groups have committed some of the worst terrorist attacks such as attacks on the World Trade centre in New York City, numbers of plane hijackings, the Dahran bombing in Saudi Arabia and many others. These have conjured up the idea of a global “fundamentalist” jihad (holy war) against the west in the eyes of western public. But the issue of terrorism is something that cannot be confined to a particular religion or region. There are groups, from all religions, nationalities, ethnic backgrounds or political persuasions that chose terrorism as a way of doing politics. In other word there is nothing in terrorism exclusive to Islam.

In addition there are many other problems with the categorisation of Islamic fundamentalism. The problem with labelling political Islam as “extremism”, “fanaticism” “fundamentalism”, “intolerant” or “irrational” does not help sociologists grasp the conditions in which these movements emerge and develop. On the contrary it has led sociologists and many other social scientists, public policy makers and politicians to a false perspective. Viewing them as “irrational” “fundamentalist” “intolerant” etc. is not always accurate definition. More importantly these are the symptoms, but the prime objective of sociologists is to find out the root causes, the driving forces of these movements rather than simply looking at the bare symptoms.

According to Campo (1995, p. 172) the use of the term fundamentalism can be criticised for four serious defects: taxonomic error, taxonomical imprecision, polemical distortion and ideological mobilisation. Its usage is arbitrary in many ways. It is often accusatory, especially in the media; Jurgensmeyer (1993, p.4) has said the term is “pejorative”. It implies these movements are “an intolerant, self-righteous and narrowly dogmatic religious literalism.” He points out that ‘the term reflects our attitude toward other people more than it describes them...To call someone a fundamentalist suggests that he or she is motivated solely by religious beliefs rather than by broad concerns about the nature of society and the World’(ibid, p.4).

Edward Said and Eduardo Campo are sharply opposed to the employment of fundamentalism in relation to Islamic movements. “Fundamentalism” as employed in

the description and explanation of developments in contemporary Muslim societies... contends that rather than referring to an objective set of phenomena, this concept has been created to serve as a key element in European and American hegemony discourses about these societies in order to subordinate and control them. This means that it is of little explanatory value; does not facilitate rendering modern amalgamation of religion and politics more intelligible..." (Campo 1995, p.165; also see Said, 1993, p.310).

Campo's and Said's concerns with the term fundamentalism are two-fold; firstly they question the objectivity of the concept. Secondly the conceptualisation of Islamist movements as fundamentalist is a deliberate attempt by the West to subordinate and control Muslim societies.

Frank Furedi (1995, pp.18-19) approaches the problem from a different perspective. He argues on the one hand that the uncritical acceptance of the term fundamentalism by western conservative, liberal and radical commentators is indicative of an erosion of intellectual criticism among the western elite. On the other hand, the fundamentalist label provides a moral and cultural condemnation of millions of people in one part of the world.

The categorisation of Islamic fundamentalism indicates a value judgment rather than an objective definition of this phenomenon. For this reason instead of using Islamic fundamentalism I prefer to use other terms like political Islam.

1.3 Existing Research and Background

There is very little research into the grassroots organisations and grassroots activism in Turkey. The Turkish literature on political parties and the party system is weak but on the party organisations and membership it is almost non-existent. One of the first empirical studies on political participation and local party organisation was undertaken by Ayse Günes Ayata (1984). She studied the local party organisations of the Republican People's Party in the early 1980s in two Turkish towns. Another empirical study was done by *Türkiye Ekonomik ve Sosyal Etüdler Vakfı TESEV* (Turkish Economic and Social Studies Foundation) in 2000. The survey was carried

out among 782 of what they called 'effective party workers' of all six parties who are active in the parties' executive committees in 36 district capitals. Despite its empirical chapter on 'effective party workers,' due to its broad scope (e.g. covering all political parties) and sampling problems it falls short in providing a detailed analysis of party activism in Turkey.

There is another study by the *Türkiye Sosyal Ekonomik Siyasal Araştırmalar Vakfı Veri Araştırma TÜSES* (Turkish Social Economic Political Research Foundation (1999) which focused on the social structure and the voters of political parties in Turkey. This study is not directly concerned with party activists but the voters. Also, Ergun Özbudun's (2000) latest book contains a chapter in which he deals with parties and party systems in Turkey. There are heard full other literatur on Turkish political parties and party system but most lack the aspects of party organisations and membership.

There is a limited body of literature on grassroots politics. I use Halliday's (1995a) 'contingent'¹⁰ approach in my study and taking grassroots activism as an independent variable. Among limited studies on grassroots activism, the focal point of this study, I have benefited considrably from Seyd and Whiteley (1992) and Whitey, Seyd and Richardson, (1994) both studies on grassroots which provided a model for my research.¹¹

As stated before across the Muslim world Islamic movements have been on the increase. Since the early 1980s the apparent rise of Islamic fundamentalism has been one of the most debated phenomenon in media and academic circles. It appears there have been different approaches developed to explain what they are and why they have been rising. Through an extensive literature review I have identified four different

¹⁰According to Fred Halliday (1995a, p.48) "contingent" approach emphasises modernity and contingency in these 'fundamentalist' movements. He argues that the rise of 'fundamentalisms' in many Third World countries originates as a reaction against the failures of the modernizing, secular state.

¹¹ In the area of political participation I must mention studies like: Deutsch (1970), Di Palma (1970), Duverger (1964), Verba and Nie (1972), Barnes and Kaase (1979), Ashford (1972), Marsh (1990), Milbrath and Goel (1977). On the party organisations I found these studies useful: Crotty (1971), Crotty and Jacobson (1980), Herrnson (1986), Huckshorn (1984), Katz and Mair (1995), Parry, Moyser and Day (1992) and Scarrow (1996).

approaches among Western scholars. The Turkish literature also confirmed that this pattern occurred among Turkish students of political sciences

1.4 The Main Approaches to Political Islam

1.4.1 Political Islam As a Threat to the West

Undoubtedly, the most common view among Western scholars regards political Islam as a threat to the west. The most important proponents of this approach are S. Huntington (1994) and B. Lewis (1990). Both scholars are very influential in American intellectual and policy circles and have determined the parameters of the discourse on Islamic fundamentalism.¹² It is assumed that Islam poses a three dimensional threat: political, civilisational and demographic. Huntington in his famous article and the book “Clash of Civilisations?” argued that most important conflicts will occur between cultures: “The fault lines between civilisations are replacing the political and ideological boundaries of the Cold War as the flash points for crisis and bloodshed” (1994: 22). For him, today, the differences between civilisations are more profound than differences between ideologies and political regimes. He says that increased interactions between civilisations, increased consciousness of civilisations and awareness of civilisational differences have increased the possibility of a clash between them (1994, p. 25). Huntington argues that one of the consequences of modernisation is that local identities disappear but that gap has been filled by religion. Islamic fundamentalism emerges as a process of “re-Islamisation” of the Middle East (ibid, p.26). For him this re-Islamisation or Islamic fundamentalism, and many other non-western cultures present a great challenge with their ambition, and resources to shape the world in non-western way.

He specified a rather bizarre ‘Confucian-Islamic’ alliance that “...emerged to challenge Western interests, values and power”. He concludes, “... a central focus of conflict for the immediate future will be between West and several Islamic-Confucian states” (ibid; 45-48). Given the influence of Professor Samuel Huntington his article provided a solid ideological base for many commentators.¹³

¹² Esposito, J (1995: 195).

¹³ See for example an article in *The Economist* titled “Islam and The West” (6th August 1996). This article took Huntington’s ideas as an intellectual framework.

In a similar vein, B. Lewis views the Islamic world as an entity that has ‘deeply rooted rage’ towards the West, especially to the US as the leader of the Western world (1990, p.195). Lewis begins by saying that “there is no Cuba, no Vietnam, in the Muslim world, but there is a Libya, an Iran and a Lebanon and an increase of hostility raises alarm bells for the Americans” (ibid). For him the hostility of Muslims towards the West becomes “rejection of Western civilisation” and because Islamic revivalist leaders describe their enemies as the enemies of God, this hostility and rejection of Western civilisation will persist for a long time.

The common point that both very influential intellectuals make is an immediate conflict between Islam and the West. Both view this conflict through a historical lens as a continuity of aggression, hatred, violence or irrationality of Islamic fundamentalism toward the west or Christianity.

1.4.1.1 As A Threat to the Modernisation and Secularisation in Turkey

There are many parallels between the ‘threat to the west’ approach in the west and some of the Turkish approaches to the political Islam in Turkey. They share some of the common elements like the Islamic fundamentalist threat, fear, anxiety and panic. The rise of the WP in the mid 1990’s generated a shock wave across the political spectrum; from extreme leftists to liberals, from ordinary folk to high society it was a shock that Turkish society had ever experienced. The panic, fear and anxiety were coupled with disbelief and dismay that an Islamic party could gather so much popularity in a strictly guided secular society in such a short time. It was a devastating blow that has shattered the 70 years dream of a truly modernized, westernised and secularised Turkish society.

The majority of Turkish radical secularist intellectuals view political Islam as a threat to the Kemalist project of modernisation, westernisation and secularisation. They argue that Islamic fundamentalists are the biggest threat to Ataturk’s *laik* (secularist) republic, democracy, nationalism and the enlightenment of Turkish society (See Çetinkaya, 1996, p. 80; Kongar, 2000, p.40; Poyraz, 1996, p. 85; Selcuk, *Cumhuriyet*, 20 January 1996; Tanilli, 1996, p. 212). According to Çetinkaya (1996, p.117)

“[Islamic fundamentalists] wants to put dynamite on the foundations of the secular and democratic republic. The most visible characteristic of [Islamic] movements is that they seek to change the life style of women completely. In many Muslim countries like in Afghanistan, Egypt and Algeria women are forced to cover themselves, to wear *highab*. Even the rights that were given thirty, forty years ago have been taken away from them.”(Ekşi, 1995, p. 9).¹⁴ The extent of the panic and fear felt by the radical secularists and some of the liberals were best illustrated by Erbil Tuşalp a political commentator. He wrote that:

Will they really exterminate those unbelievers; will they force women to wear the veil? Will they flog and lash those who are not fasting, praying and, will they amputate the hands of those who are stealing? Will they kill those who committed adultery by stoning? If the answers of those questions are “no” what then have the life in Iran, Pakistan, Libya, and Saudi Arabia shown us? (Tuşalp, 1994, p.16).

Clearly, Tuşalp and many other commentators believe that the fundamentalist threat is an imminent one and the answer for all of these questions is “yes”. The examples of many Muslim countries suggest they will not tolerate anything other than Islamic sharia law.

1.4.2 Islamic Fundamentalism Against Modernity

This approach views political Islam as an atavism, a rejection of modernity and the Western way of life (Seyyed Vali 1995: 121-139). The main theme of this approach is ‘rejection of modernity’. It is widely believed that Islamic fundamentalism is an ideology and movement based on fundamental principles of Islam extracted from the ‘secret text’ of the Koran. In other words it is seen as an ideology shaped around 700 AD and cannot be compatible with the needs of contemporary society. Islamists are often viewed as “fossilised relics, insulated from and oblivious to their surroundings, living perpetually in a bygone age” (Caplan, 1987, p. 5). Abrahamian (1991, p.102) argues that “for radicals, [Islamic fundamentalism] conjures up the image of theological obscurantism, political atavism, and the rejection of science, history, modernity, the Enlightenment, and the Industrial Revolution”. It is in fact a mistake to see these movements as anti modernist, backward looking or reactionary because

¹⁴ Also see Tuşalp, 1994 ; Poyraz, 1996, p. 85.

they are far more modern than the image presented by liberals and radical commentators. There are some ideological elements that conflict with a modernist, rational outlook but it does not mean that they are not as modern as any other contemporary social/political movements. As Larry Ray (1999, p.205) points out “...rather than being implacable enemies of modernity, Islamic revolutionary movements share important aspects of rhetoric and organizational style with the modernist, Jacobin, social imagination”.

Turkish anti modernist discourse has a similar approach to political Islam. According to Emre Kongar (2000, pp. 240-241), a leading sociologist in Turkey, political Islam developed as a counter movement against the modernisation project from the early days of the Kemalist revolution. The republic banned religion in politics in a Muslim society therefore, he says, it was a direct act against political Islam. As the antithesis of republican ideology, political Islam has been the main opposition to the Kemalist regime. For Islamists, the Sultan in the Ottoman Empire represented the divine order transmitted through the Caliphate but the nationalist movement lacked such legitimacy.

Tekeli, (1997, p. 423) on the other hand analyses the rise of political Islam in a dialectical relation with a modernisation project that started far before the Kemalist revolution. For him the 1980s and afterwards is the era of the decline of the project of modernisation and the rise of political Islam (Cited in Kongar, E 2000: 240).

Ahmet Yücekök (1997,p. 41) another student of Islam also took an evolutionary approach. From the time of the *Patrona* riots in the eighteenth century (1730) to 1950 all opposition movements had religious characteristics and developed against western influence. However, he argued, from the early 1950s the social characteristics of the religious groups changed. They became petit bourgeois and entered in to a confrontation with Istanbul’s big bourgeoisie (p. 41).

Server Tanilli views these movements as resistance to modernity and progress. They have been aiming to turn the clock backward (1996, p. 173). The real agenda of Islamic fundamentalism is not freedom of belief or religious practices that should be kept in the private sphere, but rather to destroy the democratic and secular republic,

modern legal system, abolish women rights and all of the gains of the 150 years of the Enlightenment movement in Turkey (1996, p.181). The majority of modernist, secularist writers, commentators and academics view political Islam as against modernity, secularisation and the contemporary way of life.

However, as mentioned above it is a great mistake to classify these Islamist movements as anti-modernist. On the contrary they are modern movements using traditional or classical themes for contemporary causes and borrowing from modern secular ideologies as well (See Halliday, 1995a, p. 49 and Ray, 1999, p. 205). They are modernist in terms of ideology, political strategy and tactics and organisational structure. For example according to Özbudun E (2000, p.80) the WP is the only modern mass political party in Turkey.

In fact rather than being anti-modernist these movements react against the failures of the modernising, secular states in many Third World Muslim countries. There are many reasons for this. Although many of these countries have been independent for more than half a century, so far none of them managed to solve the economic and social problems they face (Halliday, 1995a, p. 48). Very visible foreign domination since the Gulf War and a lack of democracy have also legitimatised Islamic movements, faced with foreign domination Islam turns into a nationalist ideology.

Contrary to the common modernist view the WP/VP in Turkey pursues modern worldly objectives. As Oliver Roy (1994, p.4) points out, its political cadres are mostly graduates of modern universities and grass roots members were educated in modern state schools too.¹⁵ It will be seen in chapters 5, 6 and 7 that the grassroots activists of the VP are modern in every sense. They are educated in modern Turkish schools, better skilled, better earning, middle aged and occupying higher status. They are no different from the rest of society in appearance and are not *mullas* (clerics) or *hocas* (priest). The VP itself is not based as some may think in Mosques or religious Brotherhoods but on a modern political party structure. Similarly the Turkish Islamist movement as in many other countries borrowed socialist and Marxist rhetoric, and

¹⁵ See Whiteley and Seyd, 1999.

¹⁶ A portrait of the grassroots activists of the VP will be illustrated in chapter 6.

slogans reinterpreting them successfully. e.g. the WP's *Adil Düzen* (Just Society) (see chapter 3).

1.4.3 Postmodernist Approach

There are writers like Ahmed Akbar 1992 and Haldun Gülalp 1995 who argued that the rise of Islamic fundamentalism is a direct consequence of the failure of the modernists project in the postcolonial area. It is argued that it was the modernist vision of the future societies that attracted revolutionary elite in many Muslim countries (See Ray, L 1999: 198) but with the failure of the modernist development strategy modernity lost its credibility.

Gülalp in his article "Islamism and Postmodernism" argues that there is a similarity between the criticism of modernity by Turkish Islamist writers and the post modernist critique of modernity. He examines the most representative writings of two prominent Islamic scholars: Ali Bulac and Ismet Ozel. Both of them accuse modernism and secular philosophy, which promise "paradise on earth", of failing to deliver (Gülalp, 1995, pp. 58-73). However these Islamist writers do not share the postmodernist outlook even though they also criticise modernity, materialist values and secularisation.

1.4.4 Contingent Approaches

The fourth interpretation would be non-religious but based on a causal explanation or what Fred Halliday (1995a, p.48) called a "contingent" approach. This approach emphasises modernity and contingency in these 'fundamentalist' movements. He argues that the rise of 'fundamentalisms' in many Third World countries originates as a reaction against the failures of the modernizing, secular state, which is perceived as corrupt, unable to solve economic and social problems and mostly undemocratic. They are responses to underlying issues facing these countries most importantly such as mass urbanisation, unemployment and foreign domination (Halliday, F 1995a, p. 48).

Fred Halliday (1995a) uses the term “contingent” in an article entitled “Fundamentalism and the Contemporary World”. He specifies two alternative explanations: “scriptural” and “contingent”. By contrast to the “scriptural” approach the “contingent” approach emphasises the modernity and contingency in the fundamentalist movements. It begins by drawing attention to the contemporary causes of these movements. (1995a, p. 48). There are several scholars whose interpretation of fundamentalist movements focuses on the relationship between the rise of the Islamic movements and the socio-economic, demographic and political conditions in which these movements emerged.

Contrary to the previous three approaches there are several commentators and academics who agree that fundamentalist movements are not simply engaging with re-Islamisation or restoring religious fundamentalism. Rather they are rising as a response to the economic and social crisis: unemployment, income dispersion among the lower and middle lower classes, the growing gap between poor and rich, rapid urbanisation and inadequate government services. In addition, these countries are infamous for their oppressive, corrupt, anti - democratic nature and bad human right records. (See Caplan, 1987, p. 5; Halliday, 1995a, p. 49; Keddie, 1981, pp. 244 - 245; Bulliet, 1993, p. 39; Salt, 1995, p. 24; Roy, 1994, pp. 48-53).

Since the 1970’s, especially following the oil crisis the socio-economic problems of many Third World Muslim countries have deepened. The majority of these countries experienced rapid population growth and urbanisation due to “pushing factors” in rural areas. For example Tehran’s population has tripled from three to nine million between 1970 and 1990, as has been the case for many other great Muslim metropolises in the past twenty years (Roy, O 1994: 53-54). Perhaps, one of the best examples is the Turkish case. The rapid urbanisation accelerated by the restructuring policies of IMF has been one of the most important factors in relation the unprecedented rise of the WP in elections in the mid 1990s. The major Turkish cities have been encircled by *gecekondu* (shantytowns) where the WP/VP gets most of its electoral support. ¹⁷ According to Gokce (1994: 286) *gecekondu* population is more

¹⁷ The term of *Gecekondu* , translated as “Houses which land in the night”, has been used to describe a type of housing which is hastily erected in a single night if possible with, usually, low quality materials, and they were grouped together for security reasons.(Danielson and Keles, 1985 pp.162166).

or less homogenous and unique. Majority of its population consists of the low-income groups. The material conditions of living space (housing) and living standards are not good. Social mobility and the level of education in the *gecekondu* areas are low. They spend most of their income for food, which is a sign of poverty. Another distinct social characteristic of life in the *gecekondu*s is they live in a close community, in where the family ties are strong and the solidarity is high (1994, pp. 286-287).

The issue of social justice has always been an important issue in these communities. According to World Bank figures the level of inequalities has increased. Islamist movements continuously exploit the demand for social justice and equality and the feeling of being let down by the system among the masses across the Muslim world. Particularly the decline of prestige of progressive ideologies and the failure of the "Arab Socialist" model have left the arena open to new forms of protest ideologies (Roy, 1994, pp. 51-52). Due to the decline of the left across the world the Islamist movements emerged as the only vibrant major opposition to the New World Order and its neoliberal economic policies in the 1990s. Today, the Islamist movements are the most significant opponents of injustice in society. No wonder the Welfare party in Turkey adopted social democratic rhetoric to express the grievances of the millions in the cities. Its social policies, like the *Adil Duzen* (Just Society) slogan, did indeed attract many urban poor votes from the *gecekondu*s (squatters). Turkey has been experiencing mass migration, a very high level of inflation (over 70 percent per year in the last two decades), high unemployment, a very sharp fall in income of working classes, deteriorating living standards and rampant corruption since the 1980s. The socio-economic problems were followed by the political problems of increased party fragmentation, high electoral volatility and organisational decline (See Özbudun, 2000, pp. 75-79). The WP and after its closure the VP were the most vociferous critics of growing inequalities, widespread corruption, unemployment, poverty and lack of basic services in the *gecekondu*s. Not surprisingly, Halliday (1995a) and Keddie (1981, p. 243) observed very similar symptoms prevalent in Iranian society just before the Islamic Revolution in 1979.

The growth of an explosive situation in the cities, with mass migration, rampant corruption, and inflation; the failure of the regime to allow for legitimate forms of political discontent, and prior suppression of the mass secular forces, nationalists and communists, the success of Khomeini in

leading and organising a mass political movement, focused on a set of simple, and wide goals -the ousting of the Shah and the ending of western particularly American, influence in the country. (Halliday, 1995a, p. 52).

There is no doubt that increased foreign/Western influence over the Middle East, especially after the Gulf War, and the process of globalisation and increased interference of the IMF and the World Bank along with internal socio-economic and political matters in Third World Countries has provoked growing anti-imperialist feeling in many Muslim societies. In Turkey and elsewhere Islamist movements have been equated with fundamentalism. It is a problematic approach for several reasons as argued above.

1.5 How Can The Rise Of Political Islam Be Explained?

Unlike mainstream students of political Islam I examine the causes of the rise of these movements rather than dealing with appearances. My approach is different because the main aim of this study is to grasp the dynamics of the rise of political Islam in Turkey, and in particular to find out the effects of grassroots activism on the rise of the WP/VP in the mid 1990s. It is not my goal to judge, condemn or defend the Islamists' worldview.

The central research questions can be formulated as:

- 1) What were the reasons behind the unprecedented rise of political Islam in Turkey in the 1990s? In other words why and how did the pro-Islamist Welfare Party triple its share of the vote in less than ten years between 1987 (7 per cent) and 1995 (21 per cent)?
- 2) What was the role of the WP/VP's grassroots organisations and grassroots activism in this unprecedented electoral success?

1.5.1 The Hypothesis

The rise of political Islam throughout the 1990s in Turkey cannot be explained on the basis of its anti West, anti-modernist attitude or as a postmodern condition nor as a

simple religious/ Islamic revivalism. There are a series of socio-economic and political preconditions, 'worldly reasons', for its emergence and sudden rise. I shall argue that besides the fundamental changes in the socio-economic and political conditions (e.g. the neoliberal re-structuring program that took effect from the early 1980s, rapid urbanisation and expansion of political participation), it was the WP/VP's very well-organised, militant grassroots activists who played the crucial role in increasing its share of the vote and public support, leading to the unprecedented rise of political Islam in Turkey.

1.5.2 Main Objectives

1. To find out the underlying shifts in the social-economic and political spheres that caused the ascendancy of political Islam in Turkey.
2. To examine political party organisations and party activism in Turkey: Especially the VP in perspective. In this section the party effort and its impact on voting will be examined.
3. To examine the socioeconomic and political background such as demographic characteristics, educational, occupational, income level, age, marital status and residential characteristics of the VP's grassroots activists.
4. To study their motives, aspirations, ideological and political attitudes and the major incentives to become political activist in the VP
5. To determine the main activities of grassroots activists and how they are influencing the VP's electoral outcomes
6. To look into the relationship between the VP's activists and its supporters/voters.
7. To examine the type of organisation and organisational structure. How it is organised and operated in a particular local party branch?
8. To further develop the existing theoretical framework as a method for a sociological investigation of the pro-Islamic political parties in Turkey.

1.5.3 Turkish Contingent Approach

Unlike the previous three approaches and very much like the 'Western contingent approach' the Turkish contingent approach admits the contingency and modern

characteristics of political Islam in Turkey. There are many Turkish political scientists who give priority to the socio-economic and political conditions in which the Islamic movements emerged and rose. In this context we see scholars who have been studying different aspects of political Islam. They have been seeking answers to questions like why and how the pro-Islamic WP/VP has been gained popularity in Turkey in the 1990's. One of the first studies in the 1990's was done by Gencay Şaylan (1992) who found that disaffection had been growing, especially among unemployed university graduates who favoured the WP more than other age groups (1992, pp.127-129). These writers examine the socio-economic conditions and increasingly emphasise the class dimension of this Islamist trend. For many of them the pro-Islamic WP was supported mainly by the urban poor, which constitute more than half of the population in the major cities. They are the main inhabitants of the *gecekondus* that circle all the big cities in Turkey. This is, primarily, due to the second phase of rapid urbanisation the country faced from the early 1980's. As students of Turkish urban studies all familiar with the fact that the rapid urbanization in Turkey is a phenomenon that was started much earlier in the 1950s but due to the restructuring policies of 1980s migration from rural to urban centres was accelerated at a level that was unseen before the 1980s. So, throughout this study, I will call this period as the second phase of rapid urbanization.¹⁸ Millions of people piled into the cities with no regular employment, no secure income and housing or basic services. The lower middle and lower classes saw their salaries and incomes fall more than fifty percent between 1980 and 1990. Craftsmen, artisans, small merchants and shopkeepers whose existence was undermined by the neoliberal policies implemented since the 1980s, and by globalisation also supported the WP. Traditional religious circles and the Kurdish population disillusioned with current mainstream political parties were also drawn to the WP (See Ayata, 1993, pp. 51-67; Kalaycıoğlu, 1996, pp. 403 424; Ögütçü, 1994, p. 826; Öniş, 1997, pp. 751-752; Sarıbay, 1985, p. 45).

Binnaz Toprak (1987: 227) argued that:

... what has been depicted as the "resurgence" of Islam in contemporary Turkey is, at one level, the reassertion of a historic/cultural consciousness by individuals who are unassimilated into the modernist centre, and for whom the new "palace culture" is an anomaly. ... At a second level, the apparent revival

¹⁸ This issue will be discussed thoroughly in chapter 4.

of Islam in contemporary Turkey is a reflection of social structural differences. Here again it is less a question of purely religious concerns than the expression of economic discontent through religion.

For her the apparent revival of political Islam in Turkey should be analysed on two levels. On the first level what we see is an attempt to reassert a historical/cultural consciousness by some “unassimilated” individuals. This point is similar to those western and Turkish ‘modernist approaches’, but at the second level Toprak adopts a contingent approach where she points to social structural differences and socio-economic reasons rather than purely religious concerns.

The rise of political Islam in Turkey therefore has been by and large a direct consequence of the neoliberal restructuring policies implemented since the early 1980s. These policies led to a huge income gap between rich and poor. Although Turkey is classified as an ‘emerging market’ with a dynamic, fast growing market economy, it currently has one of the worst gini coefficients- for 1994 estimated as 0.50 in terms of income distribution (Öniş, 1997, p.751). While the neoliberal restructuring policies led to a process of intensified income disparities, its political implications caused a process of party convergence. As a result the policy differences between centres left parties and centre right parties dissipated. The left moved to the centre right to such an extent they became a bad copy of the conservative or centre right parties leaving a vacuum in the political spectrum. In many ways, as Öniş (1997) points out, the WP/VP has been filling this vacuum left by the decline of the social democratic politics.

In other words, it emerges as a political movement expressing the grievances of the poor and the disadvantaged in both rural and urban areas in a social democratic guise. The appeal of political Islam as a viable alternative to secular social democracy arises not only from the strength of its moral argument in favour of equity but also from specific and concrete anti-poverty projects designed to improve the material conditions of the disadvantaged, albeit on a highly target-oriented, selective and visible basis. (Öniş, 1997, p. 748).

These movements were supported by a variety of social groups and classes for a variety of reasons: economic deprivation, cultural alienation or political disillusionment with the mainstream political parties. The best example for this is the pro Islamist WP/VP in Turkey. According to a survey conducted amongst Islamist

Welfare Party voters in Turkey only a third of WP voters voted for the party primarily because it was an Islamic party (Heper, 1997, p. 35). This clearly indicates that the majority of the people associated with political Islam are not religiously orientated jihad fighters as they are often portrayed, but in many ways merely those disaffected with current party policies. The weekly *Nokta* magazine suggested that:

In the December 1995 elections, not all who voted for the Islamist Welfare Party did so because they wanted to replace Turkey's secular democracy with a theocracy based on shari ' a. The "hard core" of Islamists who voted for the RP in 1995 has been estimated at around seven per cent of the total electorate.¹⁹

Another survey by Necdet Erder challenges *Nokta*'s findings and puts the figure at around 10 percent of the total voters in Turkey.²⁰ Contrary to common belief political Islam has not got a monolithic or homogenous social basis but rather a coalition of different groups and strata that one way or another is disaffected with the centre right and centre left parties. This coalition itself is not permanent but rather loosely connected and changes in time.

In conclusion, among the various approaches, the 'contingent approach' offers a sociologically coherent and analytical explanation for the emergence and rise of political Islam. This approach emphasises the modern characteristics and above all the contemporary causes of the rise of political Islam. However it does not address all of the essential problems. Firstly, there are problems with the definition of the concept. Secondly, the diversity of the Islamic movements has not been addressed. Thirdly and most importantly, the peculiar role of the grassroots activism within these movements has not been properly acknowledged. The affects of grassroots activism on the electoral process are the focal point of this research.

1.6 Why Grassroots Activism?

Party membership and local party organisations have been one of the least studied aspects of political parties and party systems. In recent years, however, there has been a renewed interest in the role and influence of party organisation and grassroots

¹⁹ See for detailed account see weekly *Nokta*, 26 June - 2 July 1994.

²⁰ For detail see Erder, 1999, pp. 25-25).

activism on the electoral fortunes of the political parties. (See Clarke et al, 2000; Frendreis, et al 1990; Huckfeldt, and Sprague, 1992; Whiteley, and Seyd, 1994 and 1999). The importance of local party organisation and grassroots activism is closely connected to the functions of political parties in general. Political parties with their large memberships have been one of the most successful forms of political organisations in twentieth century in the western democracies. (Scarrow, 1996, p.1). Political parties are the key components of a representative democracy. They are the bridges between politics, governments and society.

According to Neumann, S (1963 p.352) political parties are the articulate organisations of an active group of people who jointly seek access to governmental power. The control of governmental power involves electoral processes therefore access requires popular support. A political party links social forces and ideologies to governmental institutions. If the main purpose of political parties is to contest elections in order to gain control of public offices and organise the governments (Huckshorn, 1984, p.21), then winning elections becomes the first and most important condition that every aspiring party must achieve. To do this, the party must elect candidates to compete and organise election campaigning to mobilise the voters around the candidates.

In this case a well-organised party organisation must be the first condition for any kind of electoral achievement. Political parties have a variety of functions such as informing the electorate about the party's policies and goals, creating an identity and unity, strengthening party attachment and commitment among grassroots activists and finally, campaigning to influence the electoral outcome (See Pattie, et al, 1995, p. 969). Elections are about obtaining sufficient electoral support. This is where the vitality of the election campaigns and crucial role of the party activism comes in. Parties need to go out to mobilise their constituencies. Local party organisations and their activism have proven to be significantly influential in the electoral process.

Until the mid 1990's neither party membership nor local party organisations were considered significant in Turkish political literature. It appears that, many students of politics in Turkey under-estimated the militant characteristics of the WP/VP's

grassroots activists and very effective, well organised party organisations. Nonetheless, with the unprecedented rise of the pro Islamic WP in the local elections (1994) and in general elections (1995) the influence of grassroots activism and local party organisations began to appear in the writings of Turkish commentators. The WP is the only modern mass party with nationwide local party organisations and militant grassroots activism. Before it was banned it claimed to have over 4 million registered members. It was Turkey's largest political party in terms of membership (See Berkey,1996, 45; Çakır,1994, pp.216-232; Darnton, 1995; Kalaycıoğlu, 1994; Margulies and Ergin,1997, p.151; Özbudun, 2000, pp. 73-93; Şen, 1995, pp. 82-91). The following section briefly examines a sample of Turkish commentators' views about the rapid rise of the WP throughout the 1990s and the role of party organisations and grassroots activism in this process.

According to Sayari (1996) WP's dedicated grassroots activists are one of the most important elements in Refah's growing popularity. He pointed out that:

Refah owes its increasing electoral support to an efficient, disciplined, highly motivated, and well-financed organisation. The Islamists have the largest number of party workers among all Turkish political parties. Refah's grassroots organisations are staffed with dedicated cadres, male and female, who work with a missionary zeal and benefit from advanced technology, such as computers with voter registration data. Tightly organized in cell like units in each neighbourhood, Refah relies less on the media for disseminating its views and more on face-to-face contacts with the voters. (1996, p.36).

Sayari highlights the key connection between the unprecedented rise of the Welfare Party and the efficient, highly motivated, well financed party organisations and highly dedicated, missionary-like grassroots activists utilising advanced technology in their daily activities in the neighbourhoods.

Sencer Ayata (1997) also notes the positive correlation between the rise of the pro-Islamic WP in the 1990s and highly motivated, well disciplined and dedicated grassroots organisations and their distinctive activities.

As a matter of fact, the party owes its strength to its responsive and well-organized grass roots membership. The highly motivated, well disciplined, and strongly committed activists believe in their political cause as a mission ordained by God. They function at the community level, visiting every single quarter, street, and family separately, evaluating the data, and finding solutions

for each problem. To penetrate small communities, the young activists, including an army of women who can arrange home visit at any time of the day, have emerged as the party's major assets. (1997, p.52)

Similarly Ersin Kalaycıoğlu (1997) gives some examples of what the Welfare's activists were doing during the election campaign in 1995 when the WP became the largest party in the parliament. He argues that:

On the eve of the 1995 elections, numerous party activists, at the grass roots level, kept track of every voter deemed critical to the party's victory. They visited each voter before the elections, and, on election day, provided transportation to and from the polling stations for those who needed it. (1997, p.36).

More than any other mainstream political party, the WP has always maintained face-to-face relations as the communication model at the grassroots level (Şen, 1995, p. 83). The WP grassroots activists organise charity work, set up community help centres in the neighbourhood, and make regular door-to-door visits to transmit the party messages and policies. They can also listen to the comments of their potential voters rather than rely only upon mass communication as the mainstream parties do (ibid, p. 83). It is this approach that gave the Welfare Party the upper hand.

The main strategy of the WP's grassroots organisation is focused on the elections. The party aims to mobilise all of its members for the election campaigning and to recruit as many new members as the party's votes at the last elections. Refah's model of organisation is unique; it is called *tesbih* (rosary) and it appoints representative to every single neighbourhood. These representatives appoint representatives to every street, quarter and every apartment block. Right after an election, the WP's highly motivated grassroots organisations starts to campaign for the next election as if it were going to be held tomorrow (Çakır, 1994, pp. 51-59).

The way that a party organises itself is very important for effective and successful election campaigning. Beside the youth and neighbourhood committees, the VP's *Hanim Komisyonlari* (ladies commissions) turned out to be very effective campaigners. They go street-to-street in their respective neighbourhoods, canvassing building-to-building, door-to-door and meet people, mostly women in their private living spaces in a friendly manner. They organise house meetings where a *hatip* – good speaker or agitator- would speak to 30 to 50 people at once.

Özbudun, (2000, p. 84) on the other hand looks at the changing nature of campaign strategies and argues that through local branches door-to-door canvassing Turkish parties traditionally used to play an important role in securing votes. This has changed in recent years and labour intensive campaigning techniques are increasingly abandoned in favour of media led 'capital intensive' election campaigns ultimately requiring large financial resources. He argues, however that, because of changes in the way the Turkish economy is run it is very difficult for political parties to generate enough spoils to distribute to their followers, "which in the absence of strong ideological motivations is important in sapping their organizational strength"(ibid, p. 84). What has happened from the early 1980s is that the Turkish political parties have increasingly abandoned the traditional election campaigns run by local party organisations and adopted the 'capital intensive' election campaigns. But the problem with this new style is the lack of sufficient resources. In short what we see is that the old system had been abandoned without an alternative in its place restored.

There are Western commentators such as Berkey (1996 p. 45) Darnton (1995) and Zubaida (1996 p.11) who emphasise the outstanding role of grass roots activists in facilitating the rise of political Islam in Turkey. Henri Barkey in his article "Turkey, Islamic Politics, and the Kurdish Question", points out that the success of the Islamist party in the 1995 elections was due to the party's efficient utilisation of their capabilities and a complete failure of the mainstream parties to maintain consistent messages. For him the Welfare Party is the only mass-based political organisation. The local cadres throughout the country work street-by-street, building-by-building, offering material benefits to the urban poor (Berkey, 1996, p.45).

Zubaida (1996 p.11) highlights the very effective tactic used by the WP/VP activists of combining community work –which is what the most of the VP activist do- with the year round election campaigning in their respective neighbourhoods. Similarly John Darnton argued that:

No political machine can beat the Welfare Party when it comes to grass-roots organisation. Women wearing headscarves go door to door in the slums proselytising and meet inter city buses to take new arrivals in hand. (1995)

These comments suggest the WP/VP has emerged as a distinct political party. It is the very well organised, highly active and committed grassroots activism, which made the WP/VP distinguishable from other parties. As noted earlier, however, the literature on this subject has so far been speculative. It lacks empirical evidence. One of the major aims in this study therefore is to test these hypotheses.

1.6.1 The Debate On Grassroots Activism

It appears that no matter how advanced the communication technology or highly sophisticated election campaigning expertise has become, political parties need active party members ready to spend their time, energy and resources for the party's goals within a well organised, highly motivated, highly committed, missionary like grassroots organisations.

Seyd and Whiteley (1992, pp. 219-220) note that political parties still need and will continue to need members for the traditional electioneering functions of canvassing and leafleting voters and persuading supporters to go out and vote. Grassroots activists are the elected representatives of the party in the neighbourhoods and carry out electioneering. Furthermore, they have a key role in their constituencies as opinion-formers. They are often the bridges between the political party and the wider society. In this sense they are also the voice of community and set the local agenda.

In Chapter two, there will be a literature review of the grassroots organisation and the effects of grassroots activism on the political process. Not all students of electoral studies agree on the benefits of grassroots activism (see Butler, 1952; Butler, and Kavanagh, 1992; Mair, 1994; Sacarrow, 1996). For example Nuffield election studies have consistently denied the benefits of local campaigning (see Whiteley and Seyd 1999, pp. 2-3).

For many scholars the effects of the local party organisations and grassroots activism have been significantly diminished. Undoubtedly, the most commonly viewed reason for this is developments in communication technologies and campaigning techniques whereby party organisations lost their importance as an exclusive means of campaigning. Consequently, new technologies such as TV, computers, mailing systems increasingly enable leaders to get their message across voters without the

assistance of party members and grassroots organisations. In other words development of new and faster communication technologies provide the tool party leaders needed for direct contact with the voters (Scarrow, 1996, 6).²¹

However, there is a growing body of literature contradicting this view. Although not all students of electoral politics agree about the effects of party organisations on the electoral process, there is compelling evidence from case studies that grassroots activism is very influential on the parties' electoral fortunes. (See Clarke, D. Harold et al 2000; Crotty, 1971; Frensdreis, P., John, et al, 1990; Huckfeldt and Sprague, 1992; Kramer, 1970; Seyd and Whitely 1992; Whiteley and Seyd 1994 and 1999). Crotty (1971, p. 447) observed that party activity made a difference, often-substantial difference in terms of increasing the votes.

A well-organised party that extends itself to campaigning for its candidates can have a decided impact on increasing its proportionate share of the vote. Put more directly, organisation, as the professionals have so long been contending, does appear important in achieving party objectives. Party activities, and those conducted during the campaign period in particular, are important influences affecting the vote.

In a similar vein Pattie, C., Johnston, R., and Fieldhouse, E (1995) pointed out that "...the local campaign, while not as widely publicised or as glamorous as its national counterpart, still plays an important function in shaping the outcomes of British general elections."

A recent case study from Britain showed that local party activism before the general election made a significant contribution to Labour's unprecedented election victory in 1997 (Whiteley and Seyd, 1998, p. 4). They emphasised three important factors combined with local party activism. These were the declining partisan attachments among electorates, increased electoral swings due to party dealignments in the 1990's and the transformation of the Labour party to 'New Labour' that included 40 percent of the grassroots party from 1994 to 1997. (1998, pp. 4-8). The declining partisan attachment and electoral swings play the role of a catalyst making it easier to influence voters in campaigns both at national and local levels. It is obvious that when partisan attachments have weakened in this way electoral canvassing becomes

²¹ Also see Butler, D and Kavanagh, D 1992; Crotty, W and Jacobson, G 1980; Kavanagh, D and Jones B 1998; Herrnson, P. S., 1986; Huckshorn, R. J., 1984; Jones, B., et al., 1998.

relatively easier for party activists. The increased ratio of party dealignment allows party activists to convince or persuade new voters, supporters and even recruits new members more easily. The third factor however is very important because the grassroots party is a product of an active party organisation as well as the maker of it.

If we return to the Turkish political party system, Özbudun, (2000, p. 73) argued that 'Turkish parties and the party system have been facing a long-term process of institutional decline, growing fragmentation, ideological polarisation, and electoral volatility in the party system. Also individual parties have been experiencing decline in the organisational capacity, party identification and declined public support for the parties among the citizens since the 1970s.' In general Turkish politics is seen to be experiencing an impasse and the state of Turkish political parties is extremely important for this situation.

Over the last fifteen years, with the exception of the WP/VP, Turkish parties suffered a decline in their party organisations and a weakening of party identification. In general the decline of party identification has been a problem that occurred in developed countries and new democracies (see Corry 1973; Özbudun 2000, p. 79 and TESEV, 2000). Nonetheless, the Turkish case is significantly different in many ways to the general global trend. It has been distinct because the electoral volatility has been very high. As large sections of the electorate are disillusioned with their parties more than one in five vote for a different party from one election to the next. Consequently a different party won in each of the last four elections. Yet the situation has been deteriorating. Recent surveys show that on the whole no party seems to appeal to more than 10 percent of voters in the country.

Organisational decline has been another characteristic of Turkish political parties. Apart from the VP none of them are mass membership parties but mostly cadre or catchall parties with widespread clientilistic characteristics. Therefore they failed to establish and maintain nationwide party organisations throughout the country. Instead of developing well organised horizontal party networks their organisational network are based on vertical, clientilistic ties. Consequently, they are undergoing a period of political impasse in which political parties create more problems than they solve.

The WP/VP appears as the one exception among Turkish political parties. Despite this general downwards trend, WP/VP increased its share of votes and became the largest party in parliament coming to power following the general election in 1995. The WP/VP escaped this trend of increasing fragmentation, electoral volatility, party realignment, and declining party identification, party loyalty and local party organisations. The WP/VP has emerged as a beneficiary of this process. How did the WP/VP buck the trend, and why did it become the largest party while other political parties disintegrated and lost electoral support?

What are the underlying causes of the collapse of the Turkish party system? How did the WP/VP prosper while the rest of the parties lost their popularity? This thesis will address these questions particularly in light of a more detailed analysis of grassroots activism in chapters 2, 3 and 7.

1.7 The Location of The Research: The Social Environment and Voting Behaviour

From the early 1950s onwards there have been a number of studies primarily concerned with the relationship between the socio-economic conditions and voting tendencies in Western Europe and Northern America. These studies particularly focused on the relationship between social and economic neighbourhood factors and social and political participation. For example one of the earliest empirical studies of American voting behaviour concentrates on the 'social bases of American partisanship'. This study found that "an *Index of Political Predispositions* based on social classes, religion, and rural/urban residence was a strong determinant of voting choice" (Dalton, 1988, p.152). Bell and Boat's (1956) study, in San Francisco, showed that family and socioeconomic neighbourhood characteristics influence the development of informal group relations between friends, relatives, neighbours and co-workers'. Series of similar studies carried out in Britain discovered a strong correlation between socioeconomic class characteristics in a neighbourhood and voting behaviour (Berry, 1970, p.34; McAllister, I., Johnston, R. Pattie, J., Tunstall, H. Dorling, L and Rossiter, J., 2001, pp. 41-59).

With the transition to the multi-party system in 1946 similar voting patterns were noted Turkey. During my fieldwork in Ankara I observed that the social bases of party support in certain areas were determined by socioeconomic characteristics (income level, type of occupation, sector of employment and level of education etc.) in a community in the studied areas. In other words class cleavages, which had not been sufficiently credited by some observers, play a decisive role on voting choice in Turkey. We will not discuss this issue at length here but it seems that class cleavages and party support in Turkey were neglected in favour of alternative approaches like 'new political cleavages and new politics'.²²

1.7.1 Ankara

Since the 1940's rapid urbanisation has become one of the most common characteristics of developing countries. In Latin America and the Middle East the peasant societies of the 1940s and 1950s became urban societies in the 1970s. (See Roberts, 1995, pp. 1-27). In many ways political Islam has been the product of this rapid urbanisation process in many Muslim countries.

Contrary to the mainstream Western approaches considered above the Islamist movements are urban based and modern in many respects. From the pre-1979 Shah's Iran to the FLN in Algeria or the Congress Party in India in many Third World countries "the rise of fundamentalism originates as a reaction against the failures of the modernising, secular state, which has been perceived as corrupted, unable to solve economic and social problems, and, often, dictatorial". In addition to that, fundamentalist movements are responses to the very deep problems of these countries such as mass urbanisation, unemployment and former or existing foreign domination (Halliday, 1995a, p. 48).

It has been argued by several scholars that these movements are the product of the modern world. The young militants educated in modern schools; raised in recently

²² For an analysis of 'old politics' and 'new politics' see Dalton & Kuechler, 1990, Challenging the Political Order; Pakulski, J. 1991, Social Movements, pp.25-51; Russell J. Dalton, 1988, Citizen Politics in Western Democracies, pp. 151-176.

urbanised families often come from an impoverished middle class, and in contrast to the common beliefs, they are rarely mullahs. They borrowed Marxist terminology and tactics from socialists. Nor the masses who support and follow these Islamic movements are not "traditional" or "traditionalist". By and large, they live with the values of the modern city adopting the current trend of consumerism (Roy, 1994, pp. 3-4).

The Islamist movement in Turkey has many similar characteristics with other Islamic movements elsewhere highlighted by writers like Halliday (1995) and Roy (1994). It can be argued that with the exception of Afghanistan most Islamist movements are a product of rapid urbanisation and the subsequent social problems. For this reason the best location for the study of political Islam in Turkey has to be an urban area.

Among the Turkish metropolitan cities Ankara has several advantages as a candidate for this study. First of all it has geographical centrality. The main cities are located in the Marmara region (Istanbul, Kocaeli), Egean region (İzmir), or southwest (Adana) regions. They are all either on the fringes or Western coast of Turkey relatively far from the Anatolian heartland. Ankara is right in the centre from East to West, from South to North. This position makes Ankara geographically easier to reach from around the country and therefore has a much more diverse migrant population than other metropolitan cities. The empirical evidence from my fieldwork shows that: a) the vast majority (76.20 percent) of VP's grassroots activists are born outside Ankara, and, b) they come from every part of the country.²³

Second, it is a modern city. It was a small town when chosen as the capital city of the Turkish republic. It has no significant traditional, cultural or historical past to influence the political preferences of its inhabitants. It is a city where the vast majority of inhabitants are migrants from around the country. This diversity qualifies as one of the most representative of the general population in Turkey.

Thirdly, Ankara as the capital city of the staunchly secular Turkish republic was one of two (Istanbul and Ankara) metropolitan cities where the WP won the municipality

²³ For some elaboration, see Chapter, 6.

in 1994 local elections.²⁴ The election results indicated the effective, well-organised and highly committed grassroots activism of the WP/VP in Ankara.

Nevertheless, there can be problems with representation. It is true that there are big differences between regions and regional variations relating to the motives, aspirations of the grassroots activists. This is true for voter behaviour as well, but this gap can be narrowed since the bulk of the Islamic WP 's votes come mainly from poor, unurbanised *gecekondu* (slums) and, secondly from the traditional middle-class; small craftsmen, the shopkeepers, small artisans and small industrialists (Ayata, 1993, pp. 57-58; Kalaycıoğlu, 1994, pp. 402-425) whose existence has been threatened by the neoliberal market economy policies.

The results of the March 1994 local elections revealed that the pro-Islamist WP is an urban-based movement (See Çakır, 1994, p.223). This trend continued in the 24 December 1995 general election. Since the Welfare Party has been increasing its support in the city centres it was appropriate to choose the samples from one of those metropolitan areas in Turkey.

Before Atatürk the founder of the Turkish republic chose it as the capital city, Ankara was a small, dusty Anatolian town. From this historical moment Ankara has had a massive, planned and deliberate transformation in every sense. It was the only planned town reflecting the ambition of the new Kemalist elites to create a modern capital city with wide streets, long boulevards, picturesque monuments, modern theatres and art buildings. However from the early 1950s rapid migration exhausted its planned development. As all the governmental offices are concentrated in Ankara its development is predominantly driven by public employment mainly office jobs and public and private services sectors. Although there has been growth in the industrial sector, it is relatively small compared to Istanbul and the rest of the Marmara region.

In this study I have chosen two local party organisations of the WP/VP in two different administrative *ilçes* (counties/sub-districts) of Ankara in the sub-districts of

²⁴ See Shmuelewitz, 1996, p. 175

Keçiören and Mamak. They both have many similarities and differences.²⁵ Although both have a substantial gecekondu population Keçiören has a large population of traditional middle classes (artisans, merchants, shopkeepers, tradesmen). In terms of types of housing both districts contain a large proportion of gecekondu (squatter) settlements. This means both districts are home to thousands of poor, lower and lower middle class residents. Mamak however, has a larger proportion of gecekondu population than Keçiören.

1.7.2 County of Keçiören

Keçiören is one of the five main administrative districts of Ankara. According to the latest 1997 population census, its population is 615,448 people. It is located in the northern part of the city and covers 199 square km of land.²⁶ More than half of (See Özdemir, N 1998:138) its population (55 per cent) is currently living in the gecekondu. The ratio of gecekondu population in Keçiören is slightly lower than the average (58.4 per cent) in Ankara in 1993. This means, on the whole, Keçiören is a district which is home to a large lower middle and middle class population.

1.7.3 County of Mamak

Mamak is one of the poorest administrative districts of Ankara. The social and economic gap between Çankaya, a prosperous district, and Mamak is like the divide of the rich North and the poor South. Çankaya with its luxurious apartments, villas, shopping and leisure centres, green areas and parks and above all its wealthy upper middle class residents is indistinguishable from prosperous urban suburbs of a west European city. Unlike Çankaya Mamak is poverty-stricken. Some of its neighbourhoods are very poor the housing conditions are inappropriate, income per family is very low and unemployment is higher than the national average.

²⁵ The term of *Gecekondu*, translated as "Houses which land in the night", has been used to describe a type of housing which is hastily erected in a single night if possible with, usually, low quality materials and they were built as together for security reasons. Danielson and Keleş, 1985 The Politics of Rapid Urbanisation, pp.162-166.

²⁶ See the State Statistical Institute's web pages: <http://www.dic.gov.tr/TURKIS/SONIST/NUFUS/ankara.gif>

Mamak is located on the East of Ankara towards Elmadag alongside the *Samsun Yolu* (Samsun Highway) and *Nato yolu* (Nato Highway) and covers a large area (254 square km) compared to the other four administrative districts of Ankara. According to the latest population census Mamak has 405,066 people within its territory (in 1997) and its population density is 1,616 people per square km (in 1990).

The majority of Mamak's neighbourhoods are *gecekondu* (squatter) areas and are occupied by urban poor. There are a very few neighbourhoods that are occupied by traditional middle classes or new middle class professionals like doctors, lawyers, etc., Those non *gecekondu* areas are mainly in central Mamak and developed alongside the main road called *Tip Fakultesi Caddesi*. The rest of Mamak sub district mainly consists of *gecekondu* (squatter) settlements. It has at least 79 per cent *gecekondu* housing. In Mamak there are 95000 houses in total and 75000 of them *gecekondus* (squatters).²⁷

The choice of these two counties provides an opportunity to examine the diversity in terms of the WP/VP's electoral support. The WP/VP has enjoyed the electoral support from the traditional middle classes, some sections of the new middle classes the urban poor and from much of the mainly Kurdish Southeast region. Each of these social groups has different issues to represent, different expectations and attitudes yet they all support the WP/VP. The diversity of its electoral base makes an interesting case for examining why and how the party has attracted support. Nonetheless, we should remember that the vast bulk of its electoral support comes from the urban poor of the *gecekondus* (slums) of the big cities.

1.7.4 Varoşlar (Shantytowns) Seize the City

Despite the differences between Keçiören and Mamak counties the similarities are great, both having large *gecekondu* populations. As is evident from socioeconomic indicators for the vast majority of new migrants, cities did not provide better living conditions at all. For the majority the vicious circle of the poverty trap, inequality,

²⁷These figures given by Gazi Sahin the candidate mayor (presently mayor of Mamak) from Virtue Party during his interview in a local TV canal called Kanal A, 8 April 1999.

uncertainty, and unemployment has continued. The socio-economic conditions of the gecekondu areas are one of an aspect of this study. Since the gecekondu make up more than one third (8, 750, 000 people, 33.9 per cent of the urban population) of the urban population in 1990 and the pro Islamist Virtue party have a broader support in these areas. It is essential to pay particular attention to the *varoşlar*.²⁸ One third of the whole urban population live in the *varoşlar* (gecekondu) and their political action can be profound as happened with the 1994 local and 1995 general elections. It had earth-shaking effects long before the actual earthquake that shook Turkey-in İzmit on 17 August 1999.

The political significance of the *varoşlar* (gecekondu) as they are often referred to by Turkish commentators, was swiftly recognised in the elections in 1994. The WP's unprecedented election success in local elections (1994) led to close scrutiny of political reality of the gecekondu (slum) areas. In the 1994 local elections Welfare Party (WP) gained, for the first time, control of many metropolitan municipalities including Istanbul and Ankara, and many provincial capitals as well as hundreds of towns and village municipalities. It has been argued this success was by and large due to the rapid urbanisation throughout the 1980s and 90s that increased the gecekondu population significantly. (See Shmuelevitz, 1996, p.175).

1.8 Methodology, Scope And Sampling

The main research method in this study is qualitative. Qualitative methods have played a major role in political science: from the study of individuals and groups inside the formal political arena, to the political attitudes and behaviour of people (Devine, 1995, p.137). Qualitative methods are a major research tool in social sciences and have long been used in a number of sub-fields of political sciences.

²⁸ The word *varoş* (plural form *varoşlar*) is another term for gecekondu (squatters/slums) and has been widely used by Turkish writers. Its literal meaning is 'destination' as the gecekondu have been the first destination of millions of migrant workers since the 1950s.

... since participants in the world of politics have been willing to talk about their involvement in groups, their role in formal positions of power, their views about the political system and so on. Political scientists studying policy communities, for example, have interviewed pressure group activists, widely. ... Party officials and Members of Parliament have been interviewed for their views on the internal politics of political parties... Qualitative methods have been used extensively in the study of local politics in Britain. (Devine, pp.138-39).

Among qualitative methods, I have given priority to ethnography, a form of qualitative research that combines several methods.²⁹ I undertook ethnographic research in Ankara from January to May 1999 and have had two follow up visits and additional interviews in April-May 2000. At this time I had the opportunity to participate in the First General Congress of the Virtue Party on 18 May 2000. The bulk of the interviews were carried out on my first visit to Turkey before and after the local and general elections of 18th April 1999. As part of the ethnographic study I employed different methods and techniques wherever appropriate. In this study I chose two party organisations in the two counties in Ankara: Keçiören and Mamak. An important aspect of this ethnographic study involved participatory observations of various occasions among the VP's party activists. Part of my field research took place during the general election campaign of March-April, 1999.³⁰ The election campaigns started two months after my ethnographic research commenced. Consequently I had a much better opportunity to observe the local party organisations and the activities of the grassroots activists in action and was also able to compare the grassroots activism in both situations: during the election campaign and in 'normal' daily/weekly activities. I participated in all sorts of party activism from house and coffee house meetings, to visiting individual shops and households, street meetings,

²⁹ I am using the term ethnographic in the same way as Paul Atkinson, P and Hammersley, M (1994: 248) used. See also Fielding, N 1994: 154-157).

³⁰ The fact that part of my field research took place during the general election campaign. It was by and large a coincidence because it was an early general as well as local election that was called after I planned my field research. I have planned my research action plan before the parliament took a surprising decision to call early elections in 18 April 1999. I have started two months earlier (in January 1999) than the campaign started in March 1999. And had already collected considerable amount of data, made participatory observations, conducted some interviews, collected printed materials and so on. The election campaign in fact provided a rear opportunity for my study to observe the party activists in a real situation, in their day-by-day party activities. It gave me another opportunity to compare the activities of grassroots activists during an election campaign. Not surprisingly the political activities increased considerably as my informants did also acknowledge it Its impacts on data collection I can say was positive: much opportunities to observe, much opportunity to attend political gatherings, house/teahouse meetings, street parties etc., It gave me opportunity to compare grassroots activists and their activities in 'normal times' and during the election campaign.

leafleting, hanging the party flags and posters in the neighbourhoods, distributing the campaigning materials to the election bureaus in the neighbourhoods, organising charity works for the needy in the neighbourhoods as well as saloon meetings, street rallies and car convoys. I have combined participatory observations with interviews with neighbourhood representatives or members of the neighbourhood committee, ordinary party activists, party supporters, local party administrators and party candidates. I also analysed party documents, election manifestos, and candidates' speeches and recorded and later decoded various forums, discussions, and conferences attended by the VP's leaders or candidates with opposing party leaders. I have gathered a considerable amount of printed material, news articles and commentary on the election campaigning and the VP in particular. I had regular daily contacts and meetings with all sorts of VP people from the upper echelons of the party to the ordinary party supporter in the mainly gecekondu neighbourhoods. In this process I observed various aspects of the Virtue party. Not just the grassroots party organisations and their activities but also the workings of the party machinery as a whole. I observed the relationship between the leadership and the rank-and-file members from neighbourhood committees.

As ethnographic research requires I utilised various techniques to acquire a better understanding of the party activists and how they contribute the WP/VP's electoral fortunes. I did a great deal of informal interviewing with those who visit the party organisations in the sub-district branches and in the neighbourhood branches.

I used an in depth, open ended, semi-structured interviewing technique. In social sciences interviewing is one of the most commonly used research methods. (Fielding, 1994, p. 135). In broader terms interviews are classified as structured interviewing and unstructured interviewing (Fontana and Frey, 1994, pp.363-365). Fontana and Frey (1994, pp. 365-366) pointed out that unstructured interviewing provides a greater benefit than other types of interviewing techniques. Structured interviews are used to capture exact data that can be coded in order to explain behaviour within preestablished categories. Contrary to this the unstructured interviewing method is employed in order to grasp the complex behaviour of members of society without suggesting or imposing predefined classifications or any categorization that may restrict or limit the field of investigation. Two other terms 'open ended ethnographic'

and 'in-depth interview' have also been used interchangeably with the 'unstructured interview'.

Nigel Fielding (1994) categorised three types of interviewing: standardised or structured interviews, semi-standardised interview and, non-standardised or unstructured/focused interviews. The key measure of differentiating types of interviews was the degree of structure imposed on its format (pp.135-136). I have used in my ethnography the form defined as the semi-structured interviewing method. I have 35 mostly open ended questions asked in the same order but felt free to ask for more information wherever it was necessary.

1.8.1 Why in-depth interviews?

Besides hundreds of informal interviews and conversations I made 42 formal interviews, some of them were fully recorded. The length of interviews varied from 45 minutes to two hours. I chose the in depth interviewing method with mostly open-ended questions because I wanted to let my informants express themselves freely. I wanted to understand their reasons for becoming members of the Virtue party, what made them choose to become party activists, how they first got involved, was there anyone from their family or friends or was it the party (the VP) who first approached on? I wanted to grasp the reasons for my informants' participation in politics generally, then with the VP specifically.

I aimed to understand the strategy and tactics of the VP's grassroots activists, what they mostly do as political activism, how they approach potential voters, party supporters, where they usually meet with supporters/voters, what they usually talk about, what kinds of demands, problems and queries they face and how they react to these queries? I wanted to get an insight into their own perceptions of their grassroots activism, and if they thought that their activity has any influence on the electoral performance of the WP/VP. I wanted to learn about the political and ideological persuasions of the grassroots activists, and what they think about the principle of secularism in Turkey, -can a state be secular? is it possible to separate religion from the state affairs totally? Also I wanted to learn grassroots activists' own perception on the question of why political Islam has been rising in Turkey and what makes people

vote for it. In this study I have attempted to understand some of these complex questions and behaviours of the VP's grassroots activists. That is why the in-depth, semi-structured interviewing method seemed the most suitable method to use.

1.8.2 Data Collecting and Observation

No social event or phenomenon can be understood without analysing the preconditions in which this particular social event or phenomenon has occurred. In other words to understand and explain a social event or phenomenon one must be analysing historical and materialistic conditions. Following the golden rule of sociology I shall apply the analytical investigation methods in this study of grassroots activists of pro-Islamic Fazilet (Virtue) Party.

Until now no comprehensive study of either party membership or grassroots activists of Pro-Islamic Fazilet (Virtue) party has ever been conducted. Therefore there is no profile of the party membership with which to compare the findings of this study. We are well aware that this study will be the first ever study of a party membership in a Turkish context and therefore will fill the long-standing gap in this area.

The data used in this study was collected during my fieldwork in Turkey. During this field research every effort was made to collect adequate, consistent and relevant first hand information. Through formal and informal interviews, attending many various meetings, group discussions, grassroots activities, election campaign, participatory observations etc., I have managed to collect a sizable amount of data. The majority of these interviews proved very productive and informative. As well as formal and informal interviews there were numerous occasions for informal discussion groups, which I was able to attend in the sub-district party buildings. Also, I was able to make observations and even sometimes turn those informal meetings into focus group discussions.

House and Coffee House Meetings

By the first week of the February 1999, right before the local and general elections of 18 April 1999, the election campaign had entered into a new stage, it became more active and fierce. As the election campaign gathered speed it provided countless opportunities to attend several house and coffee house meetings in different

neighbourhoods. These meetings were especially valuable for my study because they allowed me to observe grassroots activists in action as they were interacting with the people that were mostly in gecekondu neighbourhoods.

Car Convoys:

There were regular 'car convoys' as they were called, at the weekends organised by the grassroots activists in the sub district level. I was able to take part in some of these car convoys, and, in fact I recorded a whole car convoy, which took more than five and half an hours in the sub district of Mamak. There were about 250 cars, mostly privately owned cars, vans, minibuses, buses and approximately 2000 -2500 people on the move. It covered all 63 neighbourhoods of Mamak, every street, boulevard, and square was visited in a festive mood. The convoy was led by a specially converted election bus, equipped with audio systems to make announcements, play party propaganda tapes and music.

1.8.3 Problems and Usefulness of the Focus Group

Interviews

Before going to the field I planned to use focus group interviews as a supplementary method because they are extremely useful tools for social research. According to Steward and Shamdasanin (1990) 'Focus groups may be useful at virtually any point in a research program, but they are particularly useful for exploratory research where rather little is known about the phenomenon of interest'. Despite their prestige and popularity my research experience showed that they are not easy to organise. However because I was doing participatory observation among the supporters and grassroots activists of the VP, I visited the party branches in Mamak and Keçiören everyday. Some days there were up to 8 or 10 people who discussed a wide range of topics such as general political issues, the performance of the first Islamist led coalition government, its failures, the use of violence in politics, should Muslims use force against the state or any particular group that confronted them. During these discussions I had the chance to convert some of these discussions into focus group interviews by asking questions and occasionally directing them without contributing too much. I wrote down these discussions into my research diary in the evenings. I

found these occasions extremely useful and informative in order to understand the ideas, perceptions, and attitudes of the VP's grassroots activists and the supporters/voters as well.

1.8.4 Gaining Access and Building Trust

I would like to thank to all those who kindly took part in my interviews. As I promised, I have changed all the names of my informants to protect the anonymity of them. So the names appears in this study are not the real names.

Gaining access to grassroots activists on the ground was the most daunting task of my study. I had the challenge of gaining both access and trust in a poisoned and extremely tense political atmosphere in Turkey. The general atmosphere was extremely nervous, the WP's closure exactly one year before and the consequences of the process of 28 February made the people around the WP and VP extremely anxious and reserved. They felt political pressure on them. In fact most felt heavily scrutinised by the authorities.

In time I overcame this extremely delicate problem. By visiting the party branches on a daily basis and hanging around, talking to people, listening to them carefully slowly and painstakingly I managed to gain the trust of a few key, party activists and local party administrators. They then served as gatekeepers to other groups.

There were a few very important factors that provided me access and trust of my informants. The first was that although the general atmosphere was hectic and people were scared to be seen politically as overactive and were suspicious of strangers; I visited the party headquarters in Ankara. There I talked with one of the deputy leaders Mr. Ismail Alptekin (MP) who is also responsible for the local party organisations nationally. The meeting was very positive; I explained who I was and what I intended with the letters from my supervisor and the department. He issued a letter to local party leaders asking for their cooperation with my study. In the meantime, I soon realised that despite the political atmosphere the fact that I was doing the study from the UK seemed a matter of prestige for them. After all someone from a British university was showing an interest in their party. This point was very important.

In this meeting there was another happy coincidence, a meeting with one of Mr. Alptekin's aides Mr. Metin Karadağ who himself is a Ph. D. student in the Cumhuriyet University from the department from which I graduated. Even though it was the first time we had met we had much in common to talk about and it provided a kind of bridge. He helped me a lot, providing party documents, printed materials and personally introduced me to the branch administrators and all the right people that I needed to meet.

On the ground however gaining trust and having access was further helped by the commencement of the election campaigning itself. Besides having a far greater opportunity to participate and observe grassroots activism in action, having an election campaign made people feel relaxed and they started to talk openly. This atmosphere created a social-psychological effect, since everything seemed political there was not much point being reserved or cautious or being suspicious of who I was. Sometimes I was just another potential voter, other times I was someone they would introduce to their clients/constituencies as someone from Britain studying their party showing the importance and the superiority of their party (the VP).

Above all, I tried to develop a good, intimate and open relationship with my informants. I always patiently explained who I was and what I was doing and the possible benefits of such a study. I was not a total stranger either. I lived in Mamak for two years in the early 1990's and my parents still have a house there where I lived after my graduation and part of my uncompleted Master's degree in the METU in Ankara. This allowed me to provide some sort of identity and belonging to Mamak.

1.8.5 Scope of the Research

This study is all about offering a scientific explanation for the unprecedented rise of the pro-Islamist Welfare Party in the (1994) local elections and (1995) general elections. This extraordinary development in Turkish politics caused a series of very serious consequences that lasted long and has probably shaped internal politics for coming decades. They range from a 'post modern coup' by Turkey's strong military forces in 1997, to the ousting of the Islamist led government, to the closure of the WP, the main actor in this political turmoil and the subject matter of this study. The party reopened under a different name the Virtue Party in 1997 and was quick to adopt all

the strategies and tactics of the WP. It inherited from the WP the same grassroots organisations and grassroots activism and is the only modern and mass political party in the country.

No doubt there have been a number of factors that played an important role in the ascension of political Islam in Turkey but like every other study this study has its limitations and I have had to draw clear boundaries. The scope of this study has been bound by the main hypothesis that the grassroots organisations and grassroots activists of the WP/VP have been crucial to electoral successes of this party. Therefore it is a study of the grassroots activists of the Virtue Party in Turkey.

1.8 6 The Sampling

I chose two sub-districts of Ankara to conduct my fieldwork the reason for this is those sub districts are very different yet in some ways very similar. Both the similarities and differences are essential for my empirical study because by studying such two counties and different neighbourhoods I wanted to collect data across various social classes, different social and cultural backgrounds and to examine why despite this difference social background they support the WP/VP. First of all the WP/VP has got a strong presence in both counties. Both municipalities governed by mayor from the VP. Secondly Keçiören and Mamak provide a well-balanced universe for my study. Also it seems both counties would be a representative of the whole process of rapid urbanisation since the 1950s in Turkey. Keçiören is much older county compared to Mamak and represents the first phase of rapid urbanisation that begun from the 1950s. For this reason it consists more (45 %) non-gecekondu housing and middle and lower middle class compared to Mamak (20%). Mamak on the other hand made municipality in 1980 and it represents the second phase of the rapid urbanisation that begun from the 1980s. Mamak is predominantly urban poor whereas

Keçiören has got sizable middle and lower middle class areas. On the whole both sub districts provided a well-balanced representation of the population of Ankara.³¹

³¹ The socio-economic and behavioural differences between informants from Keçiören and Mamak: The environmental condition and differences are been described in chapters 1 and 6, for this reason now I shall briefly describe the socio-economic, and demographic backgrounds, and behavioural differences and similarities of my informants from Mamak and Keçiören. I will also compare their motives, aspirations, ideological and political attitudes and the major incentives for them to become political activists. The first difference between my informants is concerning the place of birth although in both group the migrants are majority, one-third of Keçiörenlis were born in Ankara compare to only one-sixth of Mamaklis. Again the average years that spend in Ankara are higher in Keçiören than Mamak. Both group tending to have similar number of children. In terms of the educational qualifications, on average both groups are better-educated compare to population in Ankara. Informants from Keçiören are better-educated one-six of them university educated while only one in twenty four in Mamak. Fifty percent of Mamaklis have finished high school more than half of these are graduated from religious high schools while one-six graduated from elementary and around one-fifth finished primary schools. In Keçiören there is a big gap between upper end and lower end of educational qualifications. The largest group among Keçiörenlis (33 percent) finished elementary schools and one-sixth of them graduated from high schools. On average activists from Keçiören seems older than those from Mamak. In terms of occupational qualification there is more self-employed professionals in Keçiören 22 percent than in Mamak (8 percent) while the ratio of blue-collar workers higher (33 percent) in Keçiören than in Mamak (29 percent). The ratio of shopkeepers is higher in Keçiören (22 percent) than in Mamak (12 percent) the ratio of routine with collar workers is higher in Mamak (20 percent). There are also more retired activists in Mamak. Income levels are also vary according to the occupational pattern. On average those informants from Keçiören have higher income 148.660.000 TL (\$ 388.45) per month than in Mamak 129 180 000 TL (\$ 338. 58) per month.

In terms of joining the party there is substantial difference between two groups: some 44 percent of Keçiörenlis are 'self starters'. They decided themselves and joined the party whereas only one-quarter (25 percent) of Mamaklis are self-starters. Party's and friends role is not equal among them. In Mamak party requited one-third (33 percent) of the activists while only one-quarter (25 percent) of Keçiörenlis. It seems friend and close relatives are more influential and played grater role in Mamak. Over one-fifth (21 percent) of Mamaklis joined the VP because someone from family asked while 17 percent of Keçiörenlis did so. The most outstanding difference between two groups occurs in terms of loyalty and admiration for the party leader when joined the VP. More then one-quarter (29 percent) of Mamaklis indicated that loyalty and admiration for the leader played an important role for their membership while non of Keçiörenlis did say so. The time of membership is another important indication between these two groups. On average Keçiörenlis have been members for 16 years compared to 8 years of membership of Mamaklis.

What was the most important reason for them to become members of the WP/VP? It seem religious reasons are higher among Keçiörenlis compared to Mamaklis. Religious reasons were the most important reason for almost one-half (47 percent) of Keçiörenlis and 33 percent of Mamaklis. Ideological reasons on the other hand were high among Mamaklis (25 percent) compared to Keçiörenlis (17 percent). More than one-fifth (21 percent) of Mamaklis gave other reasons trustworthiness, cleanness and loyalty for the leader as the most important reason while 13 percent of Keçiörenlis did so. Around one-six (15.5 percent) of Keçiörenlis said the WP/VP is the best for country and can solve the socio-economic problems while 12.5 percent of Mamaklis said so. Around 8 percent of Mamaklis and 6 percent of Keçiörenlis joined the party as a reaction to other parties.

As pointed out in chapter 5 that the majority of my informants were migrated to Ankara. Looking at the districts they come from there is a different pattern. Around 37.5 percent of Mamaklis comes from Yozgat one of the conservative central Anatolian town; some 17 percent coming from Çankırı equal numbers (17 percent) were born in Ankara and 12 percent comes from Çorum. One-third (33 percent) of Keçiörenlis were born in Ankara one in ten (11 percent) came from Yozgat equal numbers from Erzurum and Bolu.

According to our data 83 percent of Keçiörenlis have atleast one person in their family who is also member, supporter or voter of the WP/VP while 75 percent of Mamaklis said so.

My main research method is a census of party leaders in each neighbourhood. Sampling is particularly important to have a well-balanced representation of any group. True representation of the sample of the population is the prime concern of sampling. There are total 105 neighbourhoods in two counties 63 in Mamak and 42 in Keçiören and each of neighbourhoods has its neighbourhood executive committees and their leaders. I wanted to interview 42 of those local party leaders out of 105 in total. In order to have an accurate representation I have used a 'systematic selection' technique one of random sampling methods (See Arber, 1994, pp. 65-80). Since I had the list of neighbourhoods in two counties of Ankara I used systematic sampling by choosing every second name from the list of total 105 neighbourhoods altogether.

In the field I interviewed 42 local party leaders from 42 different neighbourhoods of Ankara's sub districts Keçiören and Mamak. The sub-district of Mamak has got 63 neighbourhoods and Keçiören 42 neighbourhoods. These committees organise themselves exactly the same way as a sub-district committee does in the sub-district centres. I interviewed active representatives of these 42 neighbourhoods. In most cases they were the head of the neighbourhood committee but if this were not possible for any reason I chose his deputy instead.

All informants interviewed were male. There are a few reasons for this. First of all despite the fact that *hanım komisyonlari* (Commissions of ladies), as they are called within the WP/ VP, have often been acknowledged for their important contribution to electioneering, they usually remain inactive once elections are held. In other words while they rightly deserve acknowledgement for their impressive role in terms of door-to-door vote canvassing, grassroots activism needs consistency and long-term commitment. Secondly, whatever their contribution may be, ladies tend to not take full initiative but rely on the directive and advice from district branches via neighbourhood organisation which are totally dominated by the male activists. And the third reason is entirely based on concerns with problems of fieldwork. Given the boundaries of gender relations in this particular group, especially being an outsider, at least from the beginning, I anticipated some problems regarding accessibility for observation and making interviews, I decided to concentrate on mainstream grassroots

activists who constitute the majority (96 percent) and dominate the grassroots activism of the VP. According to a recent survey women comprise only 4 percent of all party membership in Turkey. (See TESEV 2000, p. 23). This is not an attempt to deny or underestimate the existence and importance of *hanimlar komisyonu* (women's committees) within the grassroots organisation but rather reflects the fact that grassroots activism is still a predominantly male issue.

1.9 The Major Changes Since This Study Began

Since I started to do my research on political Islam in Turkey in 1997 there have been some major changes in the Turkish political scenery. These are as follows:

- 1) Firstly, there has been an experience of pro- Islamic government in Turkey.
- 2) Secondly, this Islamist led coalition government was forced to step down.
- 3) Thirdly, the Welfare Party, the largest in the country was closed down by the Supreme Court on 16 th January 1998. The court argued that the WP had violated the principle of secularism in the constitution. Also the court banned the leader of the WP Necmettin Erbakan with six other MPs from politics but did not rule against the WP's more than a hundred and fifty other MPs. The court has announced its written verdict on 23 February 1998.
- 4) Fourthly, a new Islamist party called Virtue Party has been established in 17 November 1997. As way of preparation against the court's decision to close the WP down the VP was established a year earlier and replaced it in 25 February 1998. Almost all (150 out of 158) of WP's MPs in the parliament and mayors across the country have joined the VP so the VP became the largest political party in parliament.
- 5) Fifthly, the parliament voted for early elections. According to parliamentary decision the local and general elections were held on the 18 April 1999.
- 6) In the elections of 18 April 1999: the VP passed its first hurdle with minor losses. It lost 6 percent of its electoral support since 1995. Its share of the vote eroded from 21.4 per cent in 1995 to 15.41 per cent (109 seats in the assembly) in 1999. The VP did better locally than nationally. At the local level it took 17 per cent of votes and more importantly the VP retained the Istanbul and Ankara municipalities.³² This

³² For detailed results of local and general elections (1999) see daily *Milliyet* , 20 April 1999.

means that by and large voters have been happy with the VP's municipalities but at the national level voters wanted to avoid any further confrontation with the secular establishment.³³

7) The leader of the WP, ex-prime minister N. Erbakan is being charged with making anti-secular speeches and could be sent to prison for one year.

8) The Virtue Party has also been closed down by the constitutional court (on 18 June 2001), accused of being the focus of anti-secularist activities.

9) This closure has further increased the division within the VP between so called 'traditionalists' or 'grey-haired' and 'progressives' that have been there for some time. The division emerged before the WP closed down but it became most visible in the first and the last general party congress of the VP on 18 May 2000. In that congress for the first time ever there were two candidates for the leadership. R. Kutan the acting leader who had been appointed by N. Erbakan and challenging him the Abdullah Gül the representative of the 'progressives' group. To the surprise of many Mr. Gul received 42 percent of the vote from party delegates. After that congress the split grew and with the court's decision this group started to establish their party under the leadership of ex Istanbul Mayor T. Erdogan.

10) The split within the Islamist movement finally happened. Out of the Virtue Party has came two different parties under different leaderships: the *Saadet Partisi (SP)* (the Happiness Party (HP) founded by the 'traditionalist' conservative wing of the National View movement. The HP has 48 MPs in parliament. The second party is called *Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi* or (*AK parti*) (the Justice and Development Party (JDP) was founded by the 'progressive' wing, a new generation of Islamist politicians under the leadership of Tyyip Erdogan the ex-mayor of Istanbul from the WP. Currently the JDP has 52 MPs in parliament.

All of the above developments have been very important for my research programme. In the first instance it must be said that I initially proposed my research on the WP, which has since discontinued. This situation, undoubtedly raised questions about the future scope of my research. However as I mentioned above the Fazilet (Virtue) Party was established before the closure of the WP and provided a

³³ See Alpay, S , 1999.

natural successor. The Fazilet (Virtue) Party is a true copy of the Refah (Welfare) Party, both being set by the same political cadres within the Islamist movement. Of course there are some differences between the WP and the VP but these are in the higher offices. Mostly the grassroots organisations consist of the same people so there is no obstacle in studying the grassroots activists of the VP.³⁴

1.10 A Short Summary of Content of the Thesis

I began this chapter by introducing some background to the research itself. I try to understand what happened in the early 1990's in Turkish politics. In other words what sort of conditions created a need for this study in political sociology. Then I examined the problems with the categorisation of Islamic fundamentalism. This was followed by a brief summary of the major approaches to studying political Islam and their critiques. I then formulated my hypothesis and reviewed the Turkish contingent approach. The contingent approach provides a viable and useful explanation. Considering socioeconomic conditions of the phenomenon is the first objective of my research. I have reviewed the different views about the effects of grassroots activism on the electoral process, which is the second objective of this research. The last section of chapter one was devoted to the methodology, the location and sampling questions that I used throughout the study. In conclusion I provide a short summary of the content of each chapters in the thesis

Chapter two analyses the present socioeconomic and political situation in Turkey. Then the functions of the political parties in general and the origins of Turkish political cleavages will be briefly discussed. The next section looks at the Turkish political party system with the post-1980 parties in perspective. Turkish political history presents political parties as being prominent figures in Turkish politics from the late nineteenth century. However, the pre-1980 parties are mostly defined as having 'vertical loyalties' being patron-client based rather than developing 'horizontal loyalties'.³⁵

³⁴ For continuity and discontinuity see chapter 3, especially table 3.2.

³⁵ For detail see Chapter 2.

The bulk of chapter 2 is devoted to the post-1980 area. In this section the long term political consequences of the military coup of 1980 are examined and its ambitious plans for reshaping politics and its 'unintended' consequences will be highlighted. Turkish politics has been undergoing political impasse whereby political parties created more problems than they actually solved. This process did not occur in one or two years, but took more than three decades. In the economic sphere, the problems of the late 1970s have been worsened by the neoliberal restructuring policies of the 1980s and 1990s. In a sense what was intended to be a solution turned out to cause more problems. The high rate of inflation, unemployment, social inequalities and poverty has been far more prevalent since the 1980s when the implementation of IMF backed neoliberal restructuring programs started.

Long term high rates of inflation, increasing foreign and domestic public debt, the widening gap between the rich and the poor, the abandonment of most social policies and widespread political corruption have created deep pessimism and disillusionment among voters. Hence political parties experienced organisational weakening as well as a sharp decline in the party identification ties.³⁶ As a result the Turkish party system has collapsed.

However, there has been an exception to this current trend. Although all of the mainstream Turkish political parties experienced fragmentation, volatility, and organisational decay, the pro- Islamic Welfare Party and after its closure the Virtue Party, emerged as the major winner of this process. With its vast, well-organised grassroots organisations the WP/VP managed to turn this process upside down and became the largest party in the country in less than a decade. In this chapter I seek to answer the following questions: Why did the party system collapse? What are the underlying causes of the party decline in Turkey? And how did the WP/VP grow so distinctively while the rest of the parties lost their popularity?

In chapter three I explore the process of the transition of the Islamic movement to a very successful political party in Turkey. In this chapter I shall briefly look at the emergence of Islamic ideology in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, then moving to the first half of the twentieth century. In 1970 the Islamic movement was

³⁶ See Özbudun, 2000, p. 79.

transformed into a political party. This development was closely related to changes in Turkish capitalism. The 1960s marked the beginning of a transition from commercial to industrial capitalism. The mass production of industrial goods started to threaten traditional artisans, merchants and tradesmen. Islamism was an available opposition ideology they could turn to, for protection and to allow them to pursue their own interests as the Anatolian petty bourgeois class through an organised political party.

The surprising ascendancy of the WP in the mid 1990's is examined in the next section of chapter three. In this section I outline the factors that made the WP so successful. In less than ten years it became the largest political party in the parliament. In the 1994 local election the WP managed to capture hundreds of municipalities across the country including two metropolitan cities, Istanbul and Ankara. This trend continued in the general elections (1995) when the WP emerged as the largest party in parliament and formed a coalition government. In this chapter I ask how the WP succeeded, and examine the underlying causes. What were the strategies and tactics, and above all what were the role and influence of the WP's very well organised, highly committed grassroots activists? Another major theme of chapter 3 is the key policies of all Islamic parties from the NOP to the VP. The reason for this is that I wanted to see the change and continuity in this party through time. The last section of course will be devoted to the Virtue Party, established when the constitutional court closed down the WP. I shall also be looking at the changes and continuities from WP to the VP.

In chapter 4 I examine the urban roots of political Islam in Turkey. I argue that contrary to common belief the Islamic movements in many Muslim countries are urban-based movements. They are not, as many believed, confined within in the pre-modern conditions of backward, illiterate, traditional and conservative communities in the rural areas, but rather flourished in the urban areas where rapid urbanisation created tremendous socio-economic problems.

I then look specifically at the relationship between the IMF backed neoliberal restructuring policies of the post 1980s, rapid urbanisation and the rise of the WP/VP. In this section I analyse the economic and political consequences of the restructuring

policies. As a result of these policies the population balance between urban and rural areas changed dramatically. Since the mid-1980s 65 percent (40 million) of the population lives in cities. Half of this population lives in five mega-cities: Istanbul, Ankara, İzmir, Adana and Bursa. Following this section I examined the political consequences of rapid urbanisation, especially its effects on political participation in Turkey.

In chapter 5 I investigate the process of participation in order to discern the patterns of participation among the VP's grassroots activists. In other words, to find out how and why the VP's members joined the party in the first place. Examining the mechanics of how members join a political party is one of the key aspects to understand why people join them in the first place.³⁷ The process of membership is one of the less studied but important aspects of political participation. In fact, the way in which an individual joins a party, association or an interest group reveals a great deal about the organisation and the individual. I then explore patterns of participation of the WP/VP members.

Chapter six first discusses the conceptual definitions such as the mass party, party membership and grassroots activism and the emergence and development of the mass political parties in Europe will be discussed from a historical point of view. Then I review the literature on party membership and grassroots activism. The following part of chapter six is devoted to the grassroots activists of the WP/VP. The socio-economic and demographic characteristics of the VP's activists are considered. I attempt to build a profile of the VP's grassroots activists in Turkey. I examine patterns that might help explain party membership and the rationale behind becoming a political activist. It is an area in politics that so far has not been accurately understood

Chapter 7 is entitled 'not like any other party'. It looks at the effects of grassroots activism on the electoral process. This chapter is divided into two sections. In the first section is the question of whether or not party organisations matter is discussed. The 'counter argument' contests whether local party organisations have any impact on electoral performance. For these writers party organisations lost their functions as

³⁷ See Whiteley, P., Seyd, P. and Richardson (1994, p. 77).

campaigning machines and politics moved from 'party centred' to 'candidate centred'. This means that candidates not organisations organise and execute the election campaigns. However a growing body of literature suggests this is not the case at all. 'The pro-argument', as I call it, challenges this view. Despite a declining image in recent years mass membership parties are more likely to influence the electoral outcome. This section is followed by the discourse on grassroots activism of the Turkish students of politics.

In the second half of chapter 7 I analyse the empirical data collected during fieldwork in Ankara. The aim of this section is to describe all aspects of grassroots activism in Ankara: how often activists meet potential voters, how much time is spent on activism, where they meet with the people they canvass, what are their perspectives on their activities and how the party activists improve their party's electoral fortunes? This section is concluded with an analysis of the main points. The next part of chapter seven is dedicated to finding out what party activists do and how they do it. In this section different dimensions and methods of VP's activists are examined using empirical data from ethnographic research.

Chapter 8 presents my general conclusions and analysis of all empirical findings. Here, the original hypothesis will be re-evaluated in light of empirical findings and my analysis of them. In other words to test the original hypothesis evaluate whether I have reached my objectives, satisfy my objectives. Finally, the theoretical implications and possible contributions of this study to sociology in general and study of political parties and political Islam in particular will be assessed.

CHAPTER TWO

THE DECLINE OF THE TURKISH POLITICAL PARTY SYSTEM, 1980-2000: THE FAILURE OF THE MAINSTREAM PARTIES AND RISE OF POLITICAL ISLAM

2.1 Introduction

Turkish politics has been undergoing a period of political impasse.³⁸ The reason for this stalemate has been long term economic deterioration: high rate of inflation, huge foreign and domestic public debt, increased gap between rich and poor, abandonment of most social policies, and widespread political corruption have created deep pessimism and disillusionment among voters. As a result of political parties have experienced increased fragmentation, electoral volatility and organisational weakening as well as a sharp decline in party identification ties. (See Özbudun, 2000, p. 79). However, there has been an exception to this down turn trend. The WP/VP has emerged as the major winner of this process.

In this chapter I will mainly be seeking to answer the following questions: Why has the party system collapsed, how did it happen? What are the underlying causes of party decline in Turkey? As well as, how did the WP/VP thrive while the rest of the parties were losing their popularity?

2.2 The Roots of the Current Political Impasse: Politics In An Extremely Restrained Circus

It could be said that Turkey has never fully recovered from the big oil crisis of the mid-1970s. The economic crisis of the seventies soon coupled with a political crisis deepened by the provocations of extreme right wing groups. Gradually this economic

³⁸ TESEV, 2000, p. 1.

and political crisis led the country towards an impasse. In this extremely polarized and politicised atmosphere came the military intervention of 12 September 1980.

It was the military coup of the 1980s that caused another interregnum in multi-party politics. All of the existing political parties were banned from politics and a 10 per cent nationwide threshold introduced into the electoral system (Kalaycıoğlu, E 1998). The military coup of 1980 had an immense impact on Turkish political life and parties. (See Ergüder, 1991, p.51). Two decades later its effects are still detectable.

The implementation of military rule from September 1980 to November 1983 left a deep impression on the Turkish political party system. It led to further political polarisation and a de-politicisation of society. Perhaps, from the political perspective, one of the unintended consequences of the intervention was the increased fragmentation of the political parties. Due to this further polarisation none of the political parties have been able to secure a majority in the parliament since 1980.

It can be said that the post-1980 political party system was the product of an extremely undemocratic, oppressive and restrictive regime. In one sense the coup of September 1980 was staged to suppress the awakening of the masses. The military elite believed that the social awakening was too far ahead the economic development of the country. Evidently, this development was seen as a threat to the social and political order so it was believed that this situation needed to be 'corrected'. Of course this kind of 'correction', as elsewhere, would only be done by undemocratic means.

When the military intervened the existing political parties and their leaders alongside the university students and progressive sections of the working class were blamed for the social unrest. Having this perception in mind the military elite wanted to discourage the pre-1980 party leaders from politics by closing down all the parties. With the coup all the political leaders Demirel (JP), Ecevit (RPP), Erbakan (NSP), Türkeş (NAP) and high ranking cadres, MPs, and the districts' leaders of the parties were interrogated and imprisoned. Following the prison sentences the leaders were

banned from politics until 1987. They were even prevented from engaging in journalism.³⁹

The military regime had three major policies to reorganise the political party system. These were: first, to establish a two party system, second, to impose a programme of de-politicisation which included associations of the civil society and third, to close down all existing political parties and ban all of their leaders and high ranking cadres from politics.⁴⁰ These policies aimed to redefine the boundaries of the Turkish politics.

The policy of de-politicisation was very successful indeed. To materialise this policy political activity was limited to a very small section of the population. The 1982 constitution and the law of political parties restricted the political participation of public sector workers, civil servants, members of trade unions, students, teachers, soldiers, and others.

The third leg of the policy achieved a complete departure from the pre-1980 political system. By allowing the new political parties and new agents the military elite wanted to create a new political style.

2.3 Two Decades On: The Current Situation

Turkey has been experiencing the worst ever economic and political crisis of its modern history. Economically as well as politically the country is on the verge of total bankruptcy. According to recent media reports the treasury is no longer able to continue interest repayments, which mounted to billions of dollars from external and internal debt. It is estimated that total debts have reached a staggering level of around 80 to 90 percent of the country's GDP.

In a recent briefing the treasury announced that all the income (TL 16.561 trillion) generated from tax, during the first six months of this year, went towards interest

³⁹ See Tekeli Ş, 1990: 261

⁴⁰ See Sakallioğlu, Ü in Tosun, T 1999: 150.

repayments (TL 15.741 trillion) and left a budget deficit of TL 8.104 trillion.⁴¹ Many commentators and economists agree that this situation is no longer sustainable. As one daily put it “the hurting picture” of all tax revenues going to interest repayments for now but the next half year it won’t be enough.⁴² The declaration of a moratorium even has been considered.⁴³

For more than two decades the Turkish economy has been crippled by a very high rate of inflation. This long-term trend of high inflation has caused extreme poverty and a huge gulf of income between the richest and poorest sections of society.⁴⁴ However, the real roots of the country’s problems, wrote the Economist, lay in politics not in economics.⁴⁵ This trend has worsened since then. The current economic (February 2001) crisis appears to be the worst ever in the country with its all-destructive dimensions. Various surveys indicate that in terms of income inequalities Turkey has one of the worst records for income distribution.⁴⁶

⁴¹ See Istanbul Daily Sabah (17 Temmuz, 2001) ‘*Vergi gelirinin hepsi faize gitti*’ (All tax revenues went to interest repayments) Sabah, 17 July 2001.

⁴² Istanbul Daily Milliyet, 19 Temmuz 2001 “*Acı tablo*” (Hurting picture), Milliyet 19 July, 2001.

⁴³ A comparative study would be more insightful about the ratio of total debt and the GDP of a country. However this is not the place for a detailed financial analysis of Turkey’s debt problem, nevertheless one can argue that the condition that borrowing required, the interest rates that money borrowed, where and what the money will be used, the political and financial conditions that attached with and above all the capability of debt repayment of an economy are as much important as the amount of debt that a particular country have. It can be argued that two countries may be having similar ratio of debt to their GDPs but they may not be borrowing from the same conditions. The interest rates are varies very much according to the countries outlook of ‘credit ratings’ that international financial institution such as Moody’s, Standard & Poor’s grades. This credibility rates depends on many financial, political fiscal variables.⁴³ According to a Standard & Poor’s (20-Aug-2001) report “Turkey’s public sector debt burden approaching 110% of GNP ... In addition, Turkey has the highest rates of inflation and real interest rates recorded in recent years among its peers. This puts Turkey’s high public sector debt burden on an explosive spiralling course.” As the above report indicates because of the ad economic and financial outlook Turkey faces difficulty to borrow and when she does she has to pay higher interest rates than normally some other countries do. For example because of its higher credibility rate the US treasury can barrow at a much lower interest rate compare to Turkish treasury that can hardly barrow at a much higher interest rate of 8.5 % per annum (see Milliyet 24 Mayıs 2002). Also Turkish treasury mainly borrows for serving the interest repayments. According to a recent study Turkish treasury paid 190 billion dollars as interest repayments in the last 12 years (Yeni Safak, 26 Mayıs 2002).

⁴⁴ According to TESEV (2000, p. 6) in 1994 the richest 20 percent of population received 54,9 percent of the GDP while the poorest 20 percent received only 4,9 percent of the GDP. The economic crisis of 1994 was this crisis that heralded the demise of the TTP/SDPP coalition government and ended the electoral chances of the SDPP and TPP ever since.

⁴⁵ The Economist, 16 May 2001, “Turkey’s real crisis”.

⁴⁶ For the latest statistics on income distribution, see Istanbul daily, Milliyet (24 July 2001), “*Beş kişiden birinin karnı doymuyor...*” (One in five goes hungry). According to this research, the income gulf has been widened enormously. The richest 5 percent of population earns \$ 32 000 a year while the

The political side of this current crisis reveals itself in a much cruder, more expressive way. The economic and political crisis reached a stage where the country is no longer governed by the elected governments but by the IMF via Kemal Derviş who was the vice chairman of the World Bank until March 2001.⁴⁷ The current government, which is a three party coalition, has been left with no alternative, no power and no initiative to make any economic or political decisions but merely to assist Kemal Derviş who has been appointed as minister of the economy to implement the IMF's structural adjustment policies.⁴⁸

It seems that the beginning of the twenty first century brought a new phase in relations between the IMF and recipient countries. The IMF pushed aside the national governments in countries like Turkey and Argentina by appointing someone from either the IMF or the World Bank as a 'governor' who overrides the governments' capacities and implements further restructuring policies: a sharp drop in the national currency against the dollar. Thus a sharp drop in income levels and a steep rise in unemployment and poverty.⁴⁹

Socio-economic consequences of this current crisis have been extremely brutal. The Turkish Lira has devalued over 100 percent: going down from TL 680,000 per dollar in February 2001 to TL 1.5m per dollar in 17 July 2001.⁵⁰ Unemployment has been soaring rapidly, with around 580.000 workers losing their jobs in first 6 months.

In the face of this, it seems the government has totally surrendered to the demands of international institutions such as the IMF, World Bank and international markets. (See

poorest 5 percent which is 7 million people earns around \$481 in a year. It concludes the gap between rich and poor is as wide as 66 times.

⁴⁷ Birand, M. Ali (2001) "*Washington, Ankara' nın gözyaşına bakmıyor*" (Washington, does not pity Ankara's shading tears" in Istanbul daily Milliyet 21 Temmuz 2001 (21 July 2001).

⁴⁸ I am using the term 'structural adjustment' as Walden Bello defined this concept in his book called: *Dark Victory* (1994: 140).

⁴⁹ According to some economists the IMF is primarily responsible for this crisis by insisting on wrong policies. See Ercan Kumcu, "The IMF's blunder in Turkey" *Financial Times*, March 12 2001b. Also see another recent article by economist Mustafa Sonmez who points out that due to IMF's wrong policies Turkish economy has lost 120 bn dollars since 1999. See Sönmez, M *Hürriyet* (daily) "*IMF bize kişi başına 1500 dolar borçlu*" (IMF owes \$ 1500 to each of us) 28 July 2001.

⁵⁰ Istanbul daily Sabah, 18-07-2001, "*Piyasalar cildirmis olmalı*" (Markets must be craze).

Kumcu, 2001) So far no government in Turkey's history has experienced such humiliation by surrendering its capacity to foreign powers and their local collaborators to this extent.⁵¹

What we have witnessed is the once the proud, dignified and self confident Anatolian nation, 'the lords of the horizons' being brought to its knees by the international institutions and its ruling elites who are corrupt, dishonest and incompetent.⁵² As public support for these mainstream politicians and their parties began to disappear they increasingly sought external support. Obviously, this process also heralded the end of politics, as we knew it.

Although the current situation may look like an economic crisis, it has been closely connected with the impasse that the Turkish political party system has experienced. Turkish political parties have not been able to produce policies to undo this political impasse for a long time. All of them, with the exception of the WP/VP, have been declining under the hegemony of sultan-like leadership. According to a recent poll, they all score under 10 percent of the vote. Not surprisingly, the largest block of votes (40 per cent) is the undecided group that consists of those who have been disillusioned with the existing parties and are looking for an alternative. There is a feeling among the people that none of existing political parties are convincing the voters (Hasan, Milliyet, 21 July 2001).⁵³

2.3.1 Political Parties and Representative Democracy

⁵¹ See for some of the media reports from following daily papers : Hurriyet: 7 July 2001, "Ecevit: 'IMF ile çok duyarlı bir dönemdeyiz'" (Ecevit: we are in a deficit position with the IMF); Turgut, S 13 Temmuz 2001 "Ara dönem hükümeti gerekiyor" (Turkey needs a transition government); Sabah: 8 July 2001 " İşte IMF nin son uyarısı" (Here is the last warning of the IMF); 12 July 2001 "Bu kafayla çok yol alırız" (We won't go far with this mentality); Milliyet: 6 Temmuz 2001, 'Ecevit IMF yardımını keserse hayal kırıklığı olur' (Ecevit: It will be disappointing if IMF stops the credit" 12 July 2001; Sabah, 13 July 2001. I Cihan, S, 2001, "Borçlu değil ALACAKLISINIZ" (You are not debtor but the CREDITORS), *Yeni Evrensel*, (daily) Istanbul (12 Temmuz 2001); *Yeni Evrensel*, (Istanbul daily) 13 July 2001 "Kriz tacirleri krizde" (Crisis' traders are in crisis); Çaralan, İ (14 Temmuz 2001); *Yeni Evrensel*, (Istanbul daily) "Piyasa Illüzyonu" (The Illusion of the Market); 18 July 2001 "Sermaye ülkeyi kaosa sürüklüyor" (The Finance Capital Drags the Country into Chaos)

⁵² The phrase 'lords of the horizons' is coming from Jason Goodwin's book (1998) Lords of the horizons: a history of the Ottoman Empire, Chatto & Windus, London.

⁵³ Notice that these polls were carried out after the closure of the Virtue party on June 23, 2001.

Political parties are the key components of representative democracy. They help to run the election machinery and serve as the vehicles for political campaigns. They stimulate public discussion on important issues, and most importantly they serve as a bridge between the people and their governments (Huckshorn, 1984, p.7). Also, they function as: agents of elite recruitment, as agents of interest aggregation, serve as a point of reference for voters and they offer direction to government (Hague, Harrop and Breslin, 1998, p131). There is no doubt that political parties are one of the most distinctive and most successful forms of political organisations (Sacarrow, 1996, p.1), They are the major facilitators of representative democracy.

Sigmund Neumann (1963, p.352) defined the political party as:

The articulate organisation of society's active political agents, those who are concerned with the control of governmental power and who compete for popular support with another group or groups holding divergent views. As such it is the great intermediary which links social forces and ideologies to official governmental institutions and relates them to political action with the large political community. (1963, p.352).

Obviously, the control of governmental power involves an electoral process that needs popular support behind this organisation that links social forces and ideologies to governmental institutions. However, in Turkey this link between the social forces and ideologies to governmental institutions has gone missing for sometimes. Parties are often viewed as a bridge between the society and the government (Huckshorn 1984, p.7). Due to the collapse of this 'bridge' –the Turkish party system- there is a problem of representation. Parties have become organisations that serve their organisational interests more than they do the wider public interests.

2.4 The Causes of Decline: Party Fragmentation, Organisational Decline and Volatility

The post 1983 era began when the new political party law went into effect on 24 April 1983 and the following day the National Security Council (NSC) lifted the ban on politics. Within a week or so there were 17 parties formed (Ahmad, 1993, p.188). Since all of the pre-1980 parties were closed down by the coup these parties were

established by a new political elite. The majority of them were either new to politics or were the lower ranking elites from pre 1980 parties. Not all parties were new, however, for example the Great Turkey Party (GTP), was Demirel's Justice Party in disguise and the Social Democratic People's Party (SDPP) was the continuation of the RPP. The generals closed down the GTP immediately; the SDPP was not but was not allowed to take part in the first elections in 1983 either. (Ahmad, 1993, pp.188-189).⁵⁴ In the end three parties were allowed to take part in elections. They were the

Table: 2.1 Volatility and Fragmentation in the Turkish Party System (1961-1995)

Elections	Volatility ^a	Fragmentation Of Votes ^b	Fragmentation of Seats ^b	Disproportionality Index ^c	Effective Number of Parties ^d
196	-	0.71	0.70	1.0	3.3
1965	24.5	0.63	0.63	0.75	2.6
1969	11.4	0.70	0.59	7.4	2.3
1973	28.4	0.77	0.70	5.6	3.3
1977	18.3	0.68	0.60	5.5	2.5
1983	-	0.66	0.61	4.5	2.5
1987	-	0.75	0.51	15.7	2.0
1991	16.6	0.79	0.71	7.1	3.5
1995	23.0	0.83	0.77	5.8	4.3

Source: Özbudun, 2000, p. 77.

Notes: a. Total volatility is the sum of the absolute value of all changes in the percentages of votes cast for each party since the previous election divided by two. The 1961 elections are omitted because the DP was dissolved by the ruling military council (NUC), and two entirely new parties (the JP and the NTP) competed for its votes. Likewise, the 1983 elections are omitted because the military government (NSC) closed down all existing parties; thus, the three parties that competed in this elections were new. The 1987 elections are omitted because two of the three parties authorized by the NSC (the PP and NDP) were relatively artificial parties that soon disappeared after the return to competitive politics. Had these three elections been included, the average volatility score would have been much higher. In calculating the volatility scores, only parties that gained representation in parliament in at least one of the two consecutive elections were taken into account. For the 1991 elections, which the WP contested in an alliance with the NAP and the small Reformist Democracy Party, percentages of votes in the 1998 local elections were taken as a close approximation. Compiled by author.

^b Based on Douglas W. Rea's index of fractionalisation; *The Political Consequences of Electoral Laws* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967), 56.

⁵⁴ I have briefly examined all Turkish political parties of the centre left and centre right and smaller parties as well. See Appendix VI.

^c Based on Arend Lijphart's index of disproportionality, which is "the average vote-seat deviation of the two largest parties in each election"; *Democracies: Patterns of Majoritarian and Consensus Government in Twenty-One Countries* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), 163.

^d Based on Markku Laakso and Rein Taagepera's formula: $Pe = \frac{1}{\sum_{i=1}^n p_i^2}$

"Effective numbers of parties: A Measure with Application to Western Europe", *Comparative Political Studies* 12 (April 1979): 3-27. (Özbudun, 2000, p. 77).

The Key for table 2.1:

a) Electoral volatility is one of the signs of electoral change. The simplest measure of electoral change is the volatility of party vote shares between elections (Dalton R., McAllister, I. and Wattenberg M, 2000, p 39). Electoral volatility is according to Crewe, I (1985, p.9) defined as "the net change within the electoral party system resulting from individuals vote transfer and is measured by summing the percentage point change in each party's share of vote compared with the presiding election and dividing by 2. Net volatility refers to changes in the share of votes obtained by each party". However measurement of net volatility and overall volatility is subject to some problems. In the main time the number, size and the age of parties all affect the volatility level (ibid. P.10). Theoretically the rate of volatility can be between zero in a one party system where every voter votes the same party and a hundred in a hyper multiple party system but everyone votes to a different party in each election which is an unlikely situation. In other words there is no defined upper or lower range that we can compare our table 2.1. However the literature review shows that there is an established pattern of electoral volatility in European party systems. For example Pedersen M (1979) analysed the 13 European party systems for their electoral volatility and found out that the average electoral volatility between 1948 and 1977 was 8.1 per cent (1979, p. 7). Another study depicts similar index of volatility. Dalton, R., Beck A., P and Flanagan, S.C (1984, pp. 9-10) found out that average volatility was 9.7 % immediately after post war years (1948 and 1959), In the 1960s, party alignments stabilized, and party volatility decreased to 7.6 percent. This trend reversed in the 1970s, it increased to 8.7 percent. Recent studies indicate a slight increase in the party volatility (Drummond, A 2002). The average volatility score for the OECD countries has increased from below 9 percent in the 1970s to 12.6 percent by the 1990s (Dalton, R, McAllister, I and Wattenberg, M. P., 2000, P.40). Perhaps now we can compare the electoral volatility in Turkey with the existing data from OECD countries. As table 2.1 shows, the volatility index has been much higher in Turkey than the average in European countries. It was 24.5 percent in 1965 and had a dramatic decrease in the following election (11.4 percent). In the 1973 election it increased 28.4 percent and fallen to 18.3 percent in 1977 elections. It continued to fall in 1991 elections (16.6 percent) and then increased to 23.0 percent in the 1995 general elections.

b) Fragmentation of votes: Is based on Douglas W. Rae's (1967, p.56) index of fractionalisation:

The model is derived from a simple probability statistics. The chance that our two voters will have chosen the same party is approximated by the sum of the squared decimal shares of the vote obtained by all parties:

$$\text{Probability of Dyadic Agreement} = \sum_{i=1}^n T_i^2 \quad (\text{Where } T_i = \text{any party's decimal share of the vote})$$

the vote)

It follows that the probability of dyadic disagreement (here labelled F_e) is the complement of

$$\text{this quantity: } F_e = 1 - \left(\sum_{i=1}^n T_i^2 \right)$$

The resulting values are used here to indicate the extent of party system fractionalisation. According to Rae the fractionalisation values occupy a continuum, running from non-fractionalisation in perfect one-party system (F_e equals zero) to complete fractionalisation- an event never occurs. Under a perfect one-party regime, there is no fractionalisation, and no two voters could have chosen different parties (hence, F_e equals zero). Under a perfect-two party (i.e. 50-50 split) system, an intermediate form of fractionalisation exists.

The values of party fragmentation index are range between the limits of zero and one. The party fragmentation valued as none if it is near or around the zero, intermediate if the value around 0.50 and extreme if towards value of 1. Rae (ibid, pp.55-58) identified three different levels for party fractionalisation. They are: none..... intermediate.....extreme. None is indicating the fractionalisation value around zero, intermediate refers value of 0.50 or around and extreme is around value of 1.

We can now interpret table 2.1 in particular column b. It shows that the party fragmentation since 1960s in Turkey has always been over the intermediate level. The fragmentation value was 0.71 in 1960 election. By the 1965 election party alignment seemed stabilized and fragmentation decreased to 0.63. However this trend reversed in 1969 election and it vent up to 0.70. This trend did continue, fragmentation value increased to 0.77 in 1973 elections. It slides down to 0.68 in 1977 election and further decreased (0.66) in the 1983 election. Since the late 1980s it has been over the value of 0.75 (in 1987 elections), 0.79 in the 1991 elections and it was its highest (0.83) by the 1995 elections. By using Rae's valuation we can say that the party fractionalisation has been high since the late 1980s.

Fragmentation of the Seats Rae used the same formula to calculate the fractionalisation of seat shares (Fp). As the election systems varies country to country but not all parties that compete elections are represented or equally represented in the parliament. For example any party competes election has to gather above the 10 percent of national threshold to be able to represented in the parliament. Other wise the votes distributed among other bigger parties. So there is always a difference between the rate vote and numbers of seats. It is calculated as:

$$Fp = I - \left(\sum_{i=2}^n Si^2 \right)$$

c): Disproportional Index: was calculated based on Arend Lijphart's index of disproportionality. He argued that except unusual conditions, it is impossible for any electoral system to yield exactly proportional results. After assessing the formulas -for disproportionality of vote-seat -that developed by Douglas Rae's (1984) and Loosemore and Hanby (1971) Lijphart suggested that we should calculate the average of the vote-seat share differences of the two larger parties only. He used an index that showed the average vote-seat share deviation of the two largest parties in each election. How these large parties fare is a good reflection of the overall proportionality of an election result (1984, p.163). He calculated the degree of disproportional in 22 European countries from 1945 to 1980. The degree of disproportional ranged from a low average of only 0.9 in Denmark to a very high average of 12.3 percent in France. However the average indexes of disproportional for the six pluralities and majority system is 7.4 per cent and for the four plurality systems 6.6 percent (ibid, p.163). Comparing the table 2.1 with Lijphart's findings it seems the disproportional index in Turkish party system is lower in general. A part from the 1987 elections that disproportional index was 15.7 percent the average disproportional index between 1960 and 1995 is 4.7 percent. However as he pointed out the average index of disproportional are changes with the number of parties in a party system. On the whole a comparing table 2.1 with Lijphart's (1984,p.160) data shows that the average index of disproportional is much higher in Turkish party system than in those European countries where proportional representation is applied.

d) Effective Number of Parties: Lijphart (1984,p.165) argued that the disproportional characteristic of all electoral systems tends to favour the larger parties and to discriminate against the smaller ones. Therefore all electoral systems tend to reduce the effective number of parties. Than how to calculate the effective number of parties. The effective number of parties in table 2.1 was calculated on the based on Markku Laakso and Rein Taagepera's formula: $Pe = \frac{1}{\sum_{i=1}^n pi^2}$ by Özbudun (2000,p. 77). The effective

number of parties is the number of hypothetical *equal*-size parties that would have the same total effect on fractionalization of the system as have the actual parties of *unequal* size. (Laakso and Taagepera 1984, p.4)

The index of effective number of parties has been changing in Western European countries and in Turkey since the 1970s. For example in 15 European countries the average effective party number was 3.7 for 15 (1953 to 1967). It increased in the early 1970s to 4.2 effective parties. In Turkey the average of effective number of parties (2.9 effective parties) were much lower- between 1960 to 1987 - compared to above data. However the early 1990s saw a sudden steep rise to 3.9 effective parties.

People's Party (PP) later merged with the SDPP represented the left, the National Democracy Party (NDP) established by a retired general and supported by the military rule representing the centre-right and the Motherland Party (MP) founded by Turgut Özal.

Due to the high rate of electoral volatility and fragmentation the Turkish party system has been unstable. For various reasons the fragmentation and volatility has been much higher in Turkey compared with Europe. According to the TESEV's study (2000, p.12) the average volatility between 1954 and 1999 was 21 percent.⁵⁵ This means that one in every five electors changed his/her vote from one party in this election to another in the next election. In the post 1980 period the first important signs of the fragmentation came with the elections of 1989.

Although the military elite wanted to create a two party system, the post 1983 era turned out to be much more fragmented than before. The reason for this was the duplication of political parties in the centre-right as well as in the centre-left. The military government left office with the elections in 1983. But only 3 parties out of 17 were permitted to take part in elections (1983). In reality this plan soon created the opposite effect, because despite being closed down by the coup almost all the pre 1980 parties were re-established by either *emanetci*s (leader's puppets) or some low ranking party officials. By the time the pre-1980 leaders' ban was lifted (in 1987) these parties were already established under these new leaders, some of who did not want to leave the post or the party. So these pre 1980 leaders had to establish their own parties or reopen them as the court allowed. This situation not only helped the creation of extra parties in an already crowded political arena, but also caused an inflation of the political elite, a new of class politicians on all sides of the political spectrum.

The Motherland Party (MP) had won an unprecedented election victory and received 45 percent of the votes and 52.7 per cent of the total seats in the parliament. The PP

⁵⁵ Compare to the the average volatility score for the OECD countries which is 12.6 percent by the 1990s (Dalton, R, MaCallister, I and Wattenberg, M. P., 2000, P.40) 21 percent volatility is can be classified as high volatility.

received 29.2 and the NDP 17.7 per cent of the votes. The fragmentation index was measured as 0.61 in 1983 for the Assembly seats (See table 2.1).

It would not be wrong to say that the most important event affecting the fragmentation polarisation in the post 1983 era was the return of the pre 1980 leaders (Demirel, Ecevit, Erbakan and Türkeş) to politics. After four years of transition to democracy a referendum was finally called to decide the political fate of these banned leaders. The referendum held on 6 September 1987 was a narrow yes (50.3 per cent) for the lifting of the ban.

Table 2.2 Election results from 1983 to 1999

PERCENTAGES OF VOTES IN TURKISH PARLIAMENTARY AND LOCAL ELECTIONS IN POST-1980 (1983-99)									
Party	Elections								
	1983 (Parlmt)	1984 (Local)	1987 (Parlmt)	1989 (Local)	1991 (Parlmt)	1994 (Local)	1995 (Parlmt)	1999 (Local)	1999 (Parlmt)
MP	45.2	41.5	36.3	21.8	24.0	21.0	19.7	13.0	13.3
PP	30.5	8.8	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
NDP	23.3	7.1	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
SDPP	--	23.4	24.7	28.7	20.8	13.6	--	---	--
TPP	--	13.3	19.1	25.1	27.0	21.4	19.2	7.0	12.1
WP/VP*	--	4.4	7.2	9.8	16.9 ^a	19.1	21.4	17.0	15.5
DLP	--	--	8.5	9.0	10.8	8.8	14.6	10.0	22.3
NAP	--	--	2.9	4.1	--	8.0	8.2	20.0	18.1
RPP	--	--	--	--	--	4.6	10.7	--	8.9

Source: Election results years 1983 to 1995 taken from Özbudun, (1996, P. 128). The 1999 election results taken from Milliyet (20 April 1999). State Institute of Statistics. ⁵⁶

The local elections of 1989 gave an especially strong indication of the fragmentation and polarisation on both sides of the political spectrum. This time the MP received only 21 percent of the vote while its rival, Demirel's True Path Party (TPP) received 25 percent, the SDPP 28.7 percent Ecevit's Democratic Left Party (DLP) gained 9 per cent, and the WP 9.8 per cent (See Table 2.2).

⁵⁶ MP, Motherland Party; PP, Populist Party; NDP, Nationalist Democracy Party; SDPP, Social Democratic Populist Party; TPP, True Path Party; WP, Refah (Welfare) Party; DLP, Democratic Left Party; NAP, Nationalist Action Party; RPP, Republican People's Party.

^aIn alliance with the NAP and the Reformist Democracy Party.

* VP, Virtue Party is the continuation of the WP.

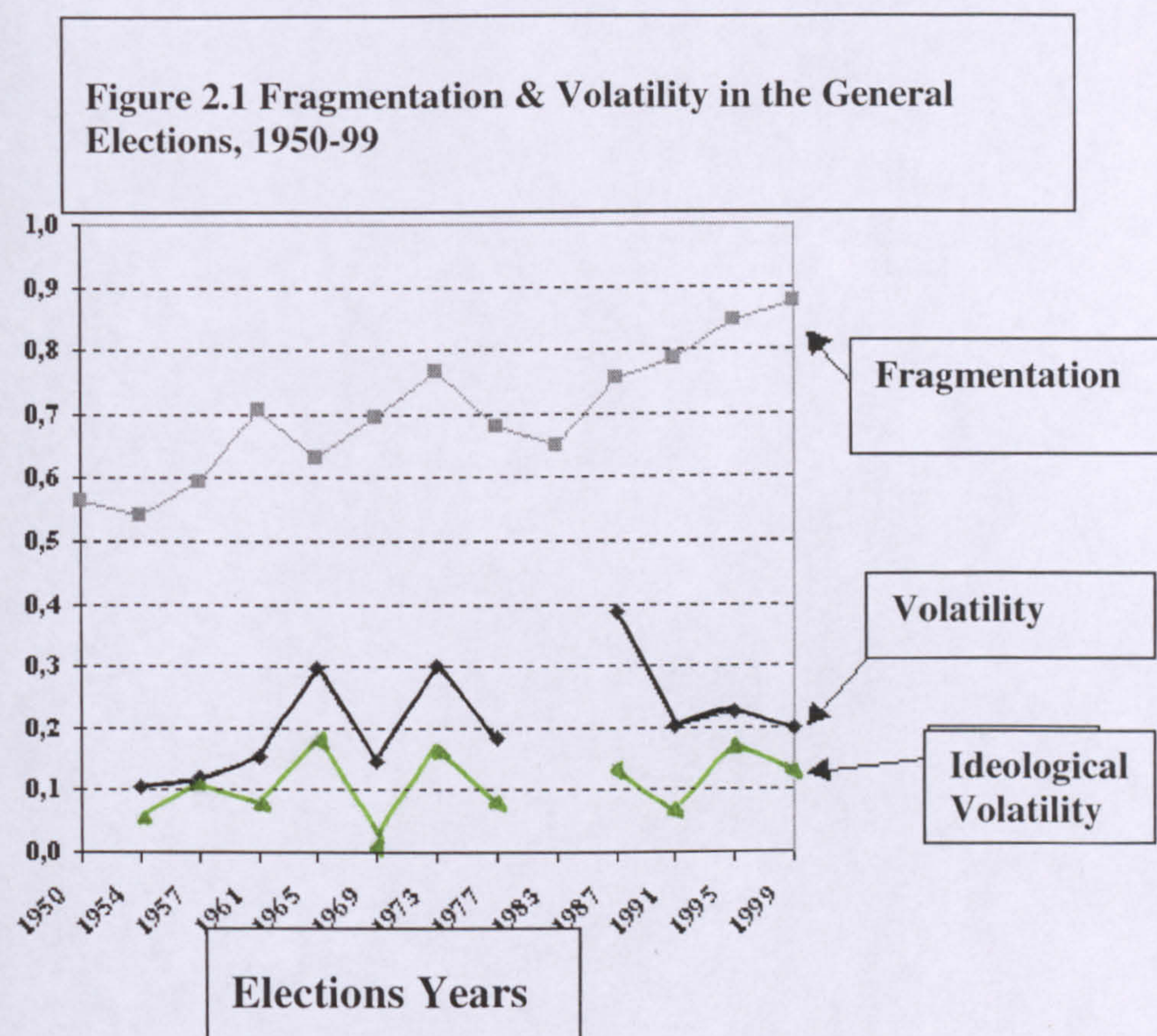
In 1991 the trend continued, with the index of fragmentation going up to 0.71 (see table 2.1). The MP received 24, and the TPP 27.0 percent of the votes. This time the electoral centre moved further toward the extreme right. The reason for this was the pre-election alliance between the WP and NAP to get into parliament, which both did by winning 16.9 percent votes. In fact when compared with the 1987 general elections, both centre-right (4.4 %) and centre-left (1.9 %) parties lost vote to this alliance.

These election results showed that the centre right was fragmented so profoundly that it could not be reversed in the foreseeable future. The subsequent elections in 1995 and 1999 confirmed this tendency (see table 2.1) and the situation was almost the same for the centre-left parties too. From the early 1990s the Turkish party system returned to the high fragmentation and electoral volatility experienced in the 1970s.

It seems Turkish party system had found a healthy balance, a stability in the 1950s and 60s but it did not last long enough to enter a process of high fragmentation and ideological polarisation from the 1970s. As Kalaycıoğlu, E (1998: 12) Pointed out: “Turkey has moved from a two-party format that functioned more like a predominant party system in the 1950s to moderate pluralism of the 1960-1980 era, and eventually towards extreme pluralism in the 1990s”.

By the 1970s there were new elements that contributed fragmentation. Islamic movement transformed into a political party the National Order Party (NOP) in 1970. It later became the NSP, which was one of the key players in the endless bargains of the coalition governments in the 1970s. The establishment of ultra nationalist-Nationalist Action Party (NAP)- marked the era of extreme or polarised multipartism in the Turkish party system. (Özbudun, 2000, p. 75) The 1970s saw a steep rise in trade union activism and student movements all over the country.

By the mid-1990's the fragmentation in the Turkish party system increased more than ever before. The WP became the largest party in the parliament but it received just 21.4 per cent of the vote (Özbudun, 2000, p. 76; Kalaycıoğlu, 1998, p.12 see also figure 2.1). The signs of further fragmentation came with the local elections in 1994 and a year later in 1995. From the early 1990s the political centre entered a process of



Source: Figure 2.1 taken from TESEV, 2000: 5 (from an online version, can be accessed on web page: www.tesev.org.tr/projeler/siyasi_parti_tebliğ11.php)

rapid decline. In this election the WP become the largest party, won 21 per cent of the votes and 158 seats out of 550. This result indicated the degree of the fragmentation index which was at a record level, 0.77 As the trend continued the MP continued to lose votes from 24 per cent in 1991 to 19.7 per cent in 1995. The TPP also lost votes from 27 to 19.2 per cent in 1995.

Yet the 1999 general elections proved to be the worst result for the mainstream centre parties of the right and left. As figure 2.1 shows, the fragmentation index was at 0.88, the highest ever in Turkish political history. Both parties of the centre-right have lost a considerable amount of votes. The MP only received 13.3 percent and the TPP 12.1

percent while the ultra nationalist NAP doubled its share of the vote to 18.1 percent. The fourth party on the right of the political spectrum, the Virtue Party, however, lost some of its previous share of the vote (from 21.4 to 15.5 percent). This loss was by and large caused by the disruption that came with the closure of the WP just a year ago.

The 1999 elections were held just a year after than the closure of the WP. Therefore there was not enough time for the VP to reorganise as the WP did. Although many of its local branches changed the name from Welfare to Virtue party, still the closure caused organisational disruption and diysfunctionalities. The second explanation that can be suggested is that the intervention that came with the process of 28 February sent a clear message to the supporters and the potential voters of the WP/VP that the party will not be allowed to come to power regardless of its electoral strength. This theory in fact has been confirmed by the results of the local elections that held in the same time with the general elections in 18 April 1999. In local elections the VP did not lose as much support (17.0 % in 1999 and 19.1 % in 1994) compared to 1994 local elections. This result indicates that the voter supported the VP in local elections but in case of the general elections because of the confrontation with the military the voter wanted to avoid further escalation of the tension.

On the left of the political spectrum there were two surprises: the first was the DLP making a very unexpected gain and becoming the largest vote gathering party by 22.3 percent, while the RPP failed to enter parliament because it scored less than ten percent (8.9 %) national threshold. So the oldest of all, the founder party of the republic was ejected from parliament by the voters that illustrates the extent of fragmentation and electoral volatility in the Turkish party system.

In addition to the fragmentation and the volatility of the Turkish electorate the party system seems to have been badly affected by a realignment of votes in the 1990s. (Kalaycıoğlu, 1998, p.12). The high level of volatility and fragmentation in the Turkish political party system has been followed by increased ideological polarisation as well. It has been estimated that approximately 10 percent of the electorate have

been swinging from one ideological group to other from one election to the next. (See figure 2.1) ⁵⁷

There are two reasons for this fragmentation and electoral volatility. Firstly military interventions: ⁵⁸ the interventions and party closures destroyed the social bases of the parties, and never allowed subsequent development of strong party identification, party organisations and party loyalties. The second reason is that the political parties in Turkey are not deeply rooted in civil society (Özbudun, E 2000, p.78). Unless parties are organised deep down in society they do not have much electoral stability.

Organisational weakness is another malaise of Turkish party system. Throughout the 1990s parties faced a real problem with the erosion of public confidence. According to a survey, political parties are the least trusted institutions in Turkey.⁵⁹ Over the last fifteen years most of the parties suffered a decline in their party organisations and weakening of party identification (Özbudun, E 2000, p.79 and TESEV 2000). Since the return to democracy in 1983, the majority of voters experienced great disappointment with the political parties due to the failure of consecutive governments to solve the country's mounting economic problems.

In contrast the mainstream Turkish parties, the WP/VP gave first priority to the strengthening of its local party organisations. It has the largest membership. It is the only party that actively engages in increasing its membership. The party with its active engagement strategy gives a role and voice to every one of its members in the local party branches.

The organisations engage in year round campaigning that is geared to electoral purposes but also acts as charitable organisations; distributing fuel in the winters, food, overcoats, shoes or grants for the school children. They establish and maintain a very intimate relationship with the neighbourhood residents and so on. All of these activities are only possible through existence of a strong, well organised and

⁵⁷ See also TESEV, 2000, p. 6.

⁵⁸ See TESEV 2000, p.11; Özbudun, 2000, p. 76.

⁵⁹ See Strateji MORI 1998: 35 (cited in TESEV (2000: 16).

effectively working party organisation that only the WP/VP has acquired and enjoyed the benefit of it.

2.4.1 Concluding remarks

Turkish politics has been shaken by a series of factors in recent decades. This shake up has not helped to install a stable, powerful and functional party system but instead has led to a further destabilisation of Turkish politics. As a result the Turkish party system has collapsed. According to Özbudun (2000: 73) 'Turkish parties and the party system have been facing a long-term process of institutional decline, growing fragmentation, ideological polarisation, and electoral volatility in the party system. Also individual parties have been experiencing decline in organisational capacity, party identification and declined public support for the parties among citizens since the 1970s.' In general it is agreed that Turkish politics have reached an impasse due to the state of the Turkish political parties.

Before I move on to the explanatory reasons and the processes of the party fragmentation, electoral volatility and organisational decay throughout the 1980s and the 1990s, it is necessary to examine the organisational structure of the Turkish political parties. I believe that the organisational structure is equally important to understanding the party decline in general and rise of the WP/VP in the recent decades.

2.5 Organisational Characteristics of Turkish Political Parties

As far as the organizational characteristics are concerned all Turkish parties show similar features because the political party laws impose a standard organizational model, which consists of party congresses and elected executive committees at the national and local level.⁶⁰ This prevents political elites from developing a structure that is more suitable to their own needs, or indeed reflects the local conditions.

There has been very little change in the organisational structure of Turkish political parties since the mid-1940s. The majority of them are described as cadre or catchall

⁶⁰ See Özbudun, 2000.

parties with strong clientilistic characteristics. The WP, however, is the only exception to this generalisation. The WP has mass party features (Özbudun, 2000, p.80). The Virtue Party (VP), the heir of the WP, was also founded on the same principles of a mass political party.

The contemporary party models have been classified as 1) Cadre/Elite Party; 2) Mass/Branch Party; 3) Catch-All Party and 4) Cartel Party (See Maor, 1997, p. 100).

⁶¹ The cadre/elite parties, catchall parties or cartel parties are all characterised by marginalized party membership. In most cases membership is maintained but not cultivated (ibid: 101).

There is an agreement among many students of politics that the local party organisations and party activists do make a significant contribution in terms of increasing parties' share of votes in the elections.⁶² From this point it can be claimed that those parties that have large membership and nationwide party organisations do get better electoral results. However as mostly cadre or catchall parties with strong leadership tendencies the majority of Turkish political parties are clearly losing out on these benefits. Although party membership is increasingly seen as a burden or costly for the party leaders to maintain, it still has many benefits for political parties.⁶³ If the parties were defined as the bridge between the people and government, then members are the bridge between parties and people.

According to Scarrow (1994, pp. 42-46), party members provide several benefits for their parties such as legitimacy benefits; direct electoral benefits, outreach benefits, financial, labour, linkage, and innovation and personnel benefits. Some have argued that due to the technological developments (communication technology: TV, computers, etc.) and social inventions (emergence of some expertise: PR experts, campaign managers, fund raisers, etc.) party leaders increasingly became autonomous from party members and organisations. They argued that the large grassroots organisations were once necessary and constituted the only way of

⁶¹ Also, for a brief review of models of party organisations (mass, cadre, catchall and cartel party) and their defining characteristics, see Maor, M (1997: 96-113).

⁶² The positive influence of the local party organisations and grassroots activism on the electoral process will be explored in Chapter 7.

⁶³ See Sacarrow, 1996.

electioneering but not any more. Now they say, the leaders have the means of direct contact with the electorate. This claim is true up to a point but the party organisations remain an asset for leaders. In many Western European countries the party organisations and membership are still valued for their role.⁶⁴

At present, except for the WP none of the Turkish political parties have active membership organisations, or widespread membership activities. A 1996 survey showed that 12.1 per cent of the voters are party members, however, due to the nature of party registers and the loose link between parties and members, it suggests that in effect membership in Turkey often consists of little more than party supporters (Özbudun, 2000, p. 80).

In 1993 the WP was the fourth largest party with over 1.1 million members while the MP had just under 2.4 million the TPP just under 22.9 million and the SDPP just under 1.4 million members.⁶⁵ It seems the WP was fourth largest, however, as mentioned the nature of the party registers are questionable, the figures may not be accurate. Even if they are accurate the nature of membership of the cadre or catchall parties is different from mass party membership. In 1994 the WP started the local election campaign with a massive membership registration campaign and reached 4.5 million members before its closure in 1998 (Çakır, 1994, pp. 51-52).

With the exception of the WP/VP, mainstream parties in Turkey are deprived of a crucial bridge, an important organic connection between the party and the people on the ground. This is not only important for expounding the party's policies, ideas, key issues, strategies or strengthening the party identity but also parties with large memberships tend to have more stability and continuity in difficult times.

Membership is especially important in a political atmosphere where the ideological differences between political parties are disappearing, or ideological commitments are declining. In such an atmosphere membership provides an anchor for stability and continuity.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ For a detailed discussion on the party members and party organisations, see Chapters 6 and 7.

⁶⁵ Schöler, 1998, p.63; and Çakır, 1994, p. 51.

⁶⁶ See Chapter 5.

Due to the lack of grassroots organisations and mass membership, the majority of Turkish parties became overly dependent on state resources: financial as well as other kind. This problem is made worse by the problem of under institutionalisation of the post 1983 political parties. For a variety of reasons, many of them have not been institutionalised.

This lack of institutionalisation is aggravated by the lack of membership support, in terms of financing, labour for day –to-day tasks in the organisations, election campaigning, etc., hence the need to use capital intensive media led campaigning methods which are very expensive. To do that, they must rely on state resources. Although they are entitled to receive some state aid according to their representation in parliament, it is often not enough to run expensive election campaigns. Therefore they have to find other ways to subsidise their election expenses. This need pushes them to become overly dependent on governmental power to create resources while in office.

2.5.1 The Genesis of The Turkish Party System and Clientilism

The first quarter of the twentieth century was marked by the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire and the foundation of the Turkish republic. Following this period the revolution of the 1923 shaped the direction and characteristic of the modern Turkish political system.⁶⁷ However, the genesis of the Turkish parties goes back to the nineteenth century. Since then Rustow (1991, p.10) argued Turkish political parties have reflected both the profound changes and underlying continuity in the country's political history. Among the major developing countries Turkey's party system was the earliest to develop. In the 1950s Fredric Frey (1965) argued that:

Turkish politics are party politics. ... With the power structure of Turkish society, the political party is the main unofficial link between the government and the larger, extra governmental groups of people.... It is perhaps in this respect above all- the existence of extensive, powerful, highly organised, grass roots parties...⁶⁸

Similarly Heper, M (1991: 3) pointed out that:

⁶⁷ Ahmad Feroz, 1977, p.2.

⁶⁸ Fredrick , W. Frey, 1965:301-303, The Turkish Political Elite, MIT Press Cambridge. Quoted in Ozbudun, E, 2000:73.

As compared with the situation in many Third World contexts, with their fairly well developed and distinct party platforms, relatively complex organisations highly differentiated from traditional social structures as well as from the military and Church, and with their active role in government, the Turkish political parties have had a significant impact on politics. As compared to their counterparts in the Western industrialised countries, too, political parties have figured prominently in the Turkish polity.

As both students of Turkish politics describe political parties have been prominent figure in Turkish politics as early as the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Again the establishment of the Republican People's Party in the early years of the republic shows that parties were given a significant role in politics. In this respect the RPP was a true grassroots party made of the small resistance groups in Anatolia. As Heper (1991) noticed above Turkish political parties played an important role in politics from the early years of twentieth century.

Dodd, C. H. (1969, p.162) too described the general characteristics of Turkish political parties in a similar vein:

In the first place, they are not a sham. They are not the tools of a narrow elite group. The political parties are not mere fiction. Universal adult franchise, real competition for nomination and election to party electoral list, well-developed local party organisation- these are characteristics of a viable political system. In brief, Turkish society is deeply permeated by political organisation.

There are many students of Turkish political parties who argued that Turkish political parties could be compared, in many ways, with western European parties. Even, in some respect, Turkish party system and representative, parliamentarian democracy is older than some of EU members e.g. Spain and Greece. Again since the 1950s the Turkish politics was centred on party politics, parties were the main channels between large sections of society and the government. This is the role that western European parties playing in politics.

From 1946 to 1960, the Turkish party system was dominated by a typical two-party system. The Republican People's Party (RPP) was representing the centre, and the Democratic Party (DP) that represented the periphery. The military coup on 27 May 1960 put an end to the DP government. ⁶⁹

⁶⁹ For an account of the military coup of 27 May 1960 see Ahmad, F 1977:147-177; Hale, W 1990:53-79; Tosun, T 1999:87-92; Kongar, E 1998: 154-156.

The Turkish party system changed from single party to two-party system with the establishment of the Democrat Party in 7 January 1946.⁷⁰ The two-party system inevitably introduced much political activity and competition into Turkish politics.

The change of power via the electoral process not only strengthened the chance for democracy in the 1950s in Turkey but also strengthened the public perception of political parties and party organisations enormously.

Towards the end of the 1960s the RPP began recovering from its hopeless electoral performance and gave the sign of becoming a serious challenger to the Democrat government (Tachau, 1991, p.99). After the 1955 the RPP started to renew its cadres. With the young cadres bringing new blood and activity to the party organisation. In time they became effective in the party management and after 1965 this young generation started to determine the direction of the party (Kabasakal, 1984, 211).

The JP established in February 22, 1961 and it was a party of the new commercial and industrial middle classes, traditional landowners and the religious sector (Dodd, 1969, pp.140-141). For some students of Turkish politics the JP was the only real grassroots party in the Middle East.⁷¹ Levi, (1991, pp.146-47) argued that the organisation of the JP was the strongest among all Turkish parties in the 1960s and 1970s. The JP's local branches were stronger and their chairman was well respected by the district's branches. Unlike other parties, the JP's parliamentarians were natives of these districts they were representing in the Assembly. Compared to the RPP more women and workers entered the parliament through the JP at that time. It was more inclusive than any other party and through its organisations many of the new rural-to-urban migrants integrated into the social life in the urban centres (ibid, p.148).

It is true that the JP have had well-organised and strong grassroots organisations across the country but it was based on the what Özbudun (2000) calls "vertical

⁷⁰ Kongar, 1998, p.146; Also for DP see Saribay, 1991, pp.119-133; Dodd, 1969, Chapter IX.

⁷¹ Sherwood, W. B (1967/8:54-65) cited in Levi, A (1991:148).

loyalties" rather than "horizontal loyalties."⁷² Also, the patron-client relationship was one of the defining characteristics of the RPP until its closure in 1980.⁷³ The historic alliance between the military-bureaucratic elite and local notables was a prime reason for this clientelistic aspect of the RPP.⁷⁴ The notables were patrons who secured through their client relations electoral support for the RPP, in return they benefited generously from the state's facilities. Sayari (1971, p. 125 quoted by Özbudun, p.82) pointed out that:

Parties concentrated their efforts in securing the allegiance of faction leaders and local patrons who were then entrusted with the task of mobilising electoral support. In either case, vertical networks of personal followings proved to be a major base for political loyalties.

The emergence of the working class was helped by the rapid urbanisation that started from the early fifties and as it grew in size its political influence expanded too. This expansion brought class politics into Turkish politics. The RPP moved its position to the centre-left by abandoning some of its traditional allies. As a result throughout the 1960s and early 1970s the electoral support for the JP and RPP was reversing dramatically.⁷⁵

The modernisation of the sixties and seventies brought a party system change. A degree of socio-economic modernisation after the elections of 1969 marked the beginning of realignment in the Turkish Party system (Özbudun, 1976, p.151; Tachau, 199, pp.108-9). The JP lost its traditional support. The reason for this was the shift in 'gecekondu's' (squatters) voting pattern.

From 1965 to 1972 the RPP adopted a new ideology and organisational structure. The new ideology that the RPP adopted was the rising ideology of the social democracy.⁷⁶ Ecevit the new leader of the RPP had the strong support of the provincial party organisations and tried to give new role and initiative to the local party branches.

⁷² According to Özbudun, (2000, p.82) the DP, when it came to power in 1950, built an effective rural machine based on the distribution of patronage and pork barrel benefits. Thus, the original two-party system was based on vertical rather than horizontal loyalties.... Later, with increasing rural-to-urban migration, similar party machines appeared in the larger cities and were used effectively by the DP and its successor, the JP." "When the DP came to power in 1950

⁷³ See Ayata-Güneş, 1990, pp. 159-185.

⁷⁴ See Sayari, 1975, p.125.

⁷⁵ For example see Özbudun, 1976, pp. 134-136, see also Tachau, F 1991, pp.108-109.

⁷⁶ See Ayata-Gunes, 1990, p.16.

However, despite all of these reformation efforts the dominant characteristic of the RPP: political patronage was not eliminated at all. The membership support was not reliable. There were very few due paying members. But the provincial delegates had a much power and they were appointed rather than elected.⁷⁷ It appeared that despite all the changes at the organisational and ideological level clientelism continued to exist in the RPP.

Since the early 1980s Turkish political parties have been moving away from organisation centred politics to candidate centred politics. In the process they have disbursed the organisations and neglected the party membership. Historically, argues Özbudun, (2000, p. 84) Turkish parties played an important role in electoral mobilisation via local party branches, door-to-door canvassing by party activists, various grassroots activities to influence voter turnout and party preferences. However, this has reversed with parties heavily reliant on media led, high tech campaigning methods (ibid: 84). It seems this shift from organisation to candidate/leader centred politics did work for a brief period in the 1980s. Nonetheless, due to the state's decreased role in the economy and privatisation of many public companies, the state revenues that government parties benefited from have fallen sharply as has their high tech, media led election campaigning ability.

Widespread clientelism among Turkish parties is another problem that causes fragmentation, volatility and organisational decline.⁷⁸ Since the beginning of multiparty democracy in the 1945, the Turkish political elite has approached socioeconomic problems with a political patronage attitude (Heper and Keyman, 1998, p. 258). Over the decades very few governments have made any efforts to

⁷⁷ See Ibid., p.163.

⁷⁸ We are not suggesting that clientelism in a party system would inevitably and under any condition would lead fragmentation, electoral volatility or organisational decline. On the contrary clientelism is a very common form of political participation across the world and would not necessarily cause fragmentation or organizational decline. But what has happened in Turkey since the late 1980s has changed the basic mechanism that clientelism emerged from and fed on. Especially as a result of IMF directed neoliberal restructuring policies the state have been withdrawn from much of economic activities. In other words this shift has severely undermined the ability of governmental parties to create spoils to distribute to its supporters. It is clear that any clientelist party can only retain its clients with provision of spoils and the less the spoil the less loyalty from the client or even diminishment of it. The decline in the spoil generating mechanism meant a decline of party attachment, identification and party support among the party supporters therefore causing fragmentation, volatility and organisational decline.

develop coherent socioeconomic policies to solve the country's problems but have instead, responded over sensitively to the demands of particular groups and particular socioeconomic issues.⁷⁹

What passed, as 'policies' on such matters were, on the whole, no more than slipshod decisions essentially motivated by a desire to garner votes.... Thus politics have not revolved essentially around the pros and cons of socioeconomic policies: political patronage has become the basic strategy of obtaining votes... Heper and Keyman, 1998, p.258.

According to the TESEV's (2000, p. 2) study, the working of the Turkish Party System reflects the relationship between the people and the state in a patron-client relationship. Party organisations work on the basis of creation and distribution of patronage. Instead of allowing internal democracy, a small elite group or the leader plays a significant role in every stage of party activity.

The post-1980 parties also adopted patron-client relationship instead of developing modern party organisations throughout the country. Even those new parties like the Motherland Party failed to develop vertical grassroots organisations. As Güneş-Ayata, (1994, p. 57) argued:

The Motherland Party (MP) ...refrained from establishing an elaborate organisational network. Even while in power, it did not attempt big campaigns for membership and developed a style of clientilism that was radically different from that of its predecessors. The MP applied pork-barrel distribution of spoils as party-directed patronage in the rural areas... However, it avoided creating vertical networks based on party cadres, preferring to concentrate on a few leaders in the big cities who later became financiers and vigorous supporters.

Perhaps, the reason for this was the leader Özal himself. He was an engineer and believed in the infinite power of technology. He was a new right-winger and an engineer. The 'social' did not matter for him. Like Margaret Thatcher he did not believe in 'society' at all: he was the chief proponent of liberal capitalism and individualism in Turkey. So with this perspective, plainly, he did not value party membership or the importance (e.g. vote canvassing, fund raising, running election campaigning) of the local party organisations.

⁷⁹ See Güneş-Ayata, 1994; Kalaycıoğlu, 1998 and Özbudun, 2000.

He adopted American style expensive, high-tech, media-lead election campaigns. He even brought some expertise from America to help him campaign for a second term in office. As the MP has never set up an elaborate party network, and has not organised deeply in the society it had to offer a kind of clientalism that would secure sufficient electoral support. The support that generated through this kind of clientilism, however, disappears very quickly if the clients are not satisfied with what they receive. Perhaps this situation explains why the MP lost its electoral popularity so drastically from 45.2 percent in 1983 to 13.3 percent in 1999.

In the case of the TPP and SDPP, as descendants of pre-1980 parties they both inherited an elaborate party organisation networks.⁸⁰ From the moment of its establishment the TPP was able to set up its local organisations very quickly because it could make use of the former JP organisations with their former staff. In 1988 the TPP officials announced that around 70 percent of the local party heads were former JP members. The TPP inherited clientelistic relations and party-patronage from its predecessor the DP and the JP (Acar, 1991, p. 190).

It was noticed that patronage politics further increased in the post-1991 period and reached its peak in 1996-97.⁸¹ However, it is not always easy to satisfy large client groups, especially in the case of slow economic growth and reduced state role in economy. Özbudun (2000, p. 84) observed that except for the WP, the majority of Turkish parties experienced a decline in their organisational strength. The reason for this he says was the slowing of economic growth and restructuring policies, which resulted in a decline in the state's role in the economy.

"These changes mean that there is a limit to spoils parties can distribute to their followers, which in the absence of strong ideological motivations is important in sapping their organisational strength. ... The WP is the only party that has avoided this decline. (2000: 84).

It can be argued that clientilism is the overriding characteristics of the Turkish party system. Political parties, in general, emerged as a product of the social conflicts and cleavages and always reflected the interests of certain groups or classes. But in Turkey especially since 1980s political parties resembles rather like the cooperation

⁸⁰ See Güneş-Ayata, 1994, p. 58.

⁸¹ Heper and Keyman, 1998, p.268.

of creating and distributing of the spoils from public resources in order to maintain public support. If they are out of power they promise to do so. As a result they lost the perspective of long term planning and investment, approaching problems with strategic long term, broad, visionary planes rather than narrow, daily, palliative solutions. That in return further destabilises the whole economic and political system.

Since the most common characteristic of the patron-client relationship is on the basis of the provision of some kind of benefits, goods and services by a patron to a client in return for loyalty or political support, either side can easily change this relationship. If a client were not happy with what he gets then he would look to patrons to maximise his benefit. That is what has happened to many of the major Turkish parties. They are based on the clientistic relations and those relations can be very unstable in times of big economic crises as Turkey witnessed several times since 1983. The clientistic nature of the Turkish party system has fed the widespread corruption in Turkey as well.

As a result of restructuring policies implemented since the 1980s, the creation of new resources (spoils) that parties can distribute to their followers has been limited to a degree where parties could not sustain their clientelist networks. This situation has caused an eventual decline in their electoral support. This situation was also partly responsible for high electoral volatility.

The majority of the Turkish parties have lost touch with the people. They have no means of setting and maintaining direct contact with their potential voters. The only exception to this is the WP/VP that has robust local organisations to carry out year round party activity. Majority of the other mainstream parties have not been organised as mass party, they lack staff, have very little active membership, above all lacking ideological conviction and enthusiasm which is very important to maintain the party support. Because they are not ideological parties members lack any meaningful reasoning to join in the first place or later become party activists. The empirical evidence shows that there is a high level of religious and ideological reasoning among the WP/VP's grassroots activists. (See chapter 5). But there is little evidence of ideological reasoning among members' of other mainstream parties. It seems they act

with the instinct of maximising their interests, receiving some sort of benefit either material or otherwise such as finding a job, receiving services, etc.

As the party of the periphery the pro-Islamist WP/VP had to rely on grassroots organisations and party membership for election campaigning and carrying out day-to-day routine at the local organisations. The WP/VP has set an example to other parties to look and learn from its successful experience with the grassroots organisations.⁸²

As I discussed above the WP as the only mass political party has got the means of mobilising millions of people by direct, face-to-face contacts. However the WP/VP is not all free of patron-client relations. There are up to some extent clientilistic attitude among its members and upper echelons of the party leadership. For example this relations would occur at the city level more often in the form of provision of services e.g. asphaltting the roads that supporter or the local party leader lives, improving other infrastructure, or in some cases providing jobs in the municipalities and connected corporations etc. But the patron client relations are not in any way the defining characteristic of the WP/VP.

Despite fact that the WP/VP is lacking intra party democracy, it is the only mass party in Turkey (Özbudun 2000). Because of that it does not need to develop an extensive network of patron client relations. It can easily mobilise millions of supporters without relying on clientilistic relations. Another evidence for this is the high level of religious and ideological reasoning among its members. This means the majority (61 percent) of its members joined the party for religious and ideological reasons ⁸³ rather than expectations of any sort of material benefit that patron client relations provide.

It can be said that having large membership organisations is not only valuable for their efforts for election campaigning but also for many other vital aspects that benefit

⁸² For example political commentator Hasan Cemal in his recent tour of Shout East Turkey describes how HADEP works: "Here the HADEP has been canvassing one-to-one, house-to-house like the WP did. Other parties needs to come and work like this ... (Milliyet 14 June 2001). Also for more detailed about the grassroots activism of the WP/VP see chapters 5, 6, and 7.

⁸³ See table 5.7

the party.⁸⁴ For example, in a political atmosphere in which high electoral volatility and political party fragmentation is persistent, large membership organisations provide strength, stability and continuity for political parties. This is where exactly the WP/VP had superiority over its rivals.

2.6 The Economipolitics of Party Decline

The election results from the late 1980s onwards have shown that the Turkish party system has been experiencing a high level of fragmentation, electoral volatility and weakening of party organisations.⁸⁵ However the ultimate questions of why it has happened, the underlying causes of this process, and also, the rise of the WP/VP, and simultaneous decline of other parties remain to be answered.

Some answers to those questions may come from party policy performances in government since 1983. Grievances, either individual or social, are one of the first and most important conditions and social bases of political action. This action could take place in either conventional politics or in protest politics. It has been suggested that people protest because they are fed up or because they experience a subjectively-Halliday sense of dissatisfaction (Marsh, 1990, p. 109). The concept of dissatisfaction could be experienced at a personal or political level (see Barnes, S et al 1979; Farah, B et al 1979). According to Russell Dalton (1988, p. 50), policy dissatisfaction is one of the six main factors that influence a citizen's decision to participate in politics. Political action could take various forms and might take place at the individual or collective level.

In terms of electoral politics, policy dissatisfaction is evaluated in relation to the party's performance while they are in government. In fact one of the best way of testing a political party is the performance that this party shows while in power. As has been discussed widely in political literature there is a positive correlation between

⁸⁴ Scarrow, S (1996: 42-25) points out the following benefits that members would bring to their parties: legitimacy benefits, direct electoral benefits, outreach benefits, financial benefits, labour benefits, innovation, and personnel benefits. Also see Chapter 3 for a debate over the value of membership.

⁸⁵ See table 2.1 and figure 2.1.

political action and dissatisfaction at the personal as well as political level. Also political action and dissatisfaction have been greatly influenced by the concept of relative deprivation (Barnes, S et al 1979,p. 382).⁸⁶

Politics can be described as ‘interest aggregation’ through political parties. The interests either individually or collectively are reflected as issues by the political parties in return for public support. In a functioning democracy, citizens control and evaluate the governments’ policy performance with legitimate means, e.g. elections. The outcome of such evaluations determines the stability of politics in general and specifically the continuation of public support for governments. As Farah, B. et al (1979, p. 409) pointed out:

It is the responsibility of the elected officials to translate these demands into public policy; their performance is subsequently evaluated by the constituency and if rated positively, *ceteris paribus*, they continue to be supported. On the other hand, when performance is viewed negatively, either the electoral option of “voting the rascals out” or other methods are used to express dissatisfaction.

It is the job of elected politicians to put into practice the issues raised or demanded by citizens, as they are constant watched and evaluated on the basis of their performance. In this process government performance is the key for political stability and continuity. If governmental outcomes are viewed negatively by a majority of citizens, they will use the legitimate control mechanisms such as the electoral process. In Turkey in the last three decades the performance of the majority of the governments has been viewed as negative. Governments have changed frequently which has led to instability and an increased political impasse.

As the number of the political parties and the possible versions of the coalition governments are limited, this constant dissatisfaction with consecutive governments’ performances led to a political stalemate. It seems that all options have been tried in the post 1983 epoch.

There has been a high level of party fragmentation, electoral volatility and organisational decay. One cannot, however, explain the entire process by the structural problems of the political parties alone. Their performance in office was also

⁸⁶ For definitions of the concept of relative deprivation, see Barnes, S et al (1979: 381-383).

very important in determining the continuity of public support. It has been observed that due to a lack of major or outstanding positive governmental performance none of the political parties have been able to secure long term electoral support.

2.6.1 The 1980s: The Özal Governments

The Motherland Party can be described as a free market oriented party. Its economic orientation was not so different from many western right-of-centre parties of the 1980s.⁸⁷ Perhaps the most important aspect of the MP was its adoption of a clientalism that was radically different from its predecessors.⁸⁸ Throughout the 1980s the MP was in government and was very influential in Turkish politics.

Özal's economic policies were predominantly inspired by the thriving ideology of the 1980's, the new right Thatcherite/Reaganite policies. New right neoliberal policies were implemented in the Turkish context where the industrial capitalism was not as developed as those countries where the neoliberal capitalism emerged from. Therefore the restructuring program combined with the MP's clientelistic attitude soon become a means of getting richer for small sections of the bourgeoisie close to the MP government in a very short time. They used public resources while millions experienced significant reductions in their income and living standards. According to Emre Kongar (2000) Özal's inheritance can be collected under four headings:

1) The economic inheritance: Transformation from an import substitution economy to an export oriented economy open to international competition. In this era the inequalities, income distribution worsened at the expense of the majority of the people. A huge gulf between rich and poor occurred and this trend continued. Chronic high inflation was another characteristic of this era and was actually used as a means of shifting resources.

2) Political inheritance: The attitude of the secular, democratic and social state was undermined. Instead political Islam was allowed to flourish. The principles of the social state, rule of law and democracy were replaced by authoritarian and closed state

⁸⁷ See Ergüder, 1991, p. 154.

⁸⁸ See Güneş-Ayata, 1994, pp. 49-65.

structures. By using this authoritarian state structure the MP governments used public resources and facilities for its political ends in a clientilistic manner.

3) Social Inheritance: The public sphere was closed to civil society organisations. Working class organisations were weakened: trade unions, flexible job market, etc., while religious brotherhoods expanded their organisations and gained large financial and political influence. Political elites and bureaucracy increasingly independent of any social and legal control used power and financial resources in an uncontrolled way.

4) The Cultural inheritance: Those positive feudal values such as loyalty and trustworthiness were rejected in favour of negative feudal values such as authoritarianism and exploitation. In the area of industrial values systems the positive aspects such as trustworthiness and freedom condition for living together, and productivity were neglected while the values of the wild capitalism, opportunism and individualism were adopted. (Kongar, 2000, pp. 331-332).

Getting rich by any means and at any price was a widespread ethos in the 1980s, undermining the social fabric. Social and moral values were deeply shaken as a result of the wild capitalist attitudes of the MP governments.

The Motherland Party has destroyed all the values we held sacred. Ten years ago we as a nation used to consider swindling, theft, bribery and corruption as dishonourable. Now they are normal things. The Yalcin affair reflects this; Yalcin, whom we would have criticised a few years ago, has become everyone's darling today. (Ahmad, F, 1993, p. 209).

The above quote illustrates correct what happened within a decade under the MP's government, in Turkey. There have been very few governments or political leaders that have had such far-reaching impacts on so many aspects of the social life. Although the Motherland Party came to power with a great majority, its clientilistic attitude meant that only a very small minority enjoyed the MP government years. According to a study between 1980 and 1986, 30 trillion Turkish Lira had been transferred from wages (including farm labour) and salaries as profit, interest, and rent

to the capitalist sector.⁸⁹ Parallel to these findings the share of the wages and salaries within the GDP fell from 28 % to 14 %, similarly the agricultural sector lost half of its share of income within the GDP.⁹⁰ As income disparity increased so did the grievances of the lower and lower middle classes, shopkeepers, artisans, merchants and the peasantry. By the end of 1980's the Turkish working class was on the march to reclaim its rights lost with the 12 September regime. Nevertheless, the biggest challenge to Özal came from the pre-1980 political leaders and their new parties the TPP and SDPP.

The local elections of 1989 gave the strongest indication of the decline of the MP's popularity. In that election, despite being in office and utilising all possible government resources the MP received only 21 per cent of the votes and became the third party. There were many reasons for this most importantly: the continuing high rate of inflation (around 70 per cent a year), unemployment, increased inequalities, a widened income gap, Özal's dictatorial, anti-democratic attitude, growing allegations of widespread corruption in politics including the Özal family and the MP's upper echelons, the unsolved Kurdish problem and political violence.

In contrast, this election was a turning point for the centre-left SDPP. The SDPP increased its share of the vote by 4 per cent, to 28 percent, and captured 40 out of 67 provincial centres including many metropolitan municipalities like Istanbul, Ankara, and Izmir (Mango, 1991, p. 180). It was a success for the SDDP and could have been a historic chance if the party had implemented sound social democratic policies, transparent, accountable management and responsive local governance. It would have won the general elections in 1991 on its own. But the SDPP made fatal mistakes, especially in Istanbul and Ankara and lost its chance for the general election (See Kongar, 2000, p. 223). The SDPP was not only unsuccessful in governing the municipalities and providing services, but many of its mayors and the upper echelons in the municipalities were involved in corruption scandals. Scandals that involved several billion Turkish lira such as İSKİ in Istanbul and ASKİ in Ankara which tarnished its image as the party of the centre left and caused a sharp decline in its

⁸⁹ See Ahmad, F 1991: 204.

⁹⁰ See chapter 4.

popularity. Also the growing influence of Ecevit and his party within the SDPP was another factor that led to the diminishment of the SDPP's electoral support.

2.6.2 The 1990s: The Era of Great Expectations And Disappointments

Prime minister Mesut Yilmaz called early elections to be held on 20 October 1991, and the results were hardly surprising. Demirel's TPP became the largest party, capturing 27 percent of the vote and 177 seats, the MP 24 percent of the vote and 114 seats, the SDPP 20.8 % of the vote and 89 seats, the WP 16.9 % of the vote and 62 seats and DLP 10.8 % of the vote and 7 seats in the parliament (see Gökçe, 1996, p. 43; Özbudun, 2000, p. 76). This election highlighted the increasing fragmentation of the party system to a degree where the largest party, the TPP, received only around a quarter (27 per cent) of the votes. This situation forced a coalition government of the TPP and the SDPP. It is now clear, after more than a decade, that the TPP and SDPP government was only the beginning of a long and unstable era of coalition governments in Turkey.

The Demirel and İnönü government was announced on 20 November 1991 and despite initial fears the coalition government turned out to be stable and effective. This situation of course raised expectation of the government to solve the chronic problems of inflation and unemployment and find democratic solutions for the Kurdish problem. The TPP/SDPP government delivered very little. Instead Turkey faced a worsened economic crisis and an intensified war in the southeast.

The April 1994 economic crisis, which was one of the worst in Turkish history, caused growing public disenchantment with the government. The government took drastic measures known as the economic decisions of 5 April: introduced an austere program to control inflation, strengthen the TL and increase exports and economic growth. Instead of solving these problems, inflation jumped from 74 percent in March 1994 to 144.3 percent in March 1995. In terms of income inequalities Turkey became the fifth worst nation for unequal distribution behind Brazil, Colombia, Mexico, and Chile (Tosun, 1999, pp. 178-179). The Turkish currency was devalued

over 50 per cent, thousands of workers were laid off, and wages and salaries eroded more than half in real terms. The agricultural sector also suffered big losses under the TPP, SDPP coalition government.

As mentioned above the TPP was popular in small towns and villages while the SDPP's policies and ideology appealed to the working class and the new migrants of the *gecekondus*.⁹¹ But, with the economic programme of 5 April the government sabotaged itself. This austerity program hurt the working classes, wage and salary earners, lower and lower middle classes, shopkeepers, merchants and artisans who voted for the SDPP.

2.7 Conclusion

What do all of these post 1983 governments' experiences tell us? It appears that they have all got one thing in common: failure. They all failed to solve country's long term socio-economic and political problems: high inflation, unemployment, income inequalities, over-urbanisation, housing shortages, deprivation in the *gecekondus* (slums), limiting the budget deficits, controlling the huge external and internal public debt, finding a democratic solution to the Kurdish question, improving the education and health services and so on. Undoubtedly this situation has caused growing public disillusionment with all centre-left and centre-right parties.

As a result of the neoliberal restructuring programmes, especially privatisation of public companies, millions lost their jobs, the wage and salary earners experienced over 50 percent loss in their real incomes, the agricultural sector which employs 43 percent of the work force, saw its share of GDP fall from 28 percent to 14 percent. This means millions of small and medium sized farming families lost half their earnings. The total external debt rose to around 119 billion dollars, while internal debt soared dramatically to around 90 billion dollars. The level of debt reached a stage where the country was desperate to find new loans to keep up the interest repayments. All austerity programs of the last two decades have produced nothing but increased

⁹¹ See Chapter 4 for some detail on *gecekondus*, and living conditions of the *gecekondu* population.

burdens for ordinary people.⁹² Without exception, all post 1983 governments have failed to live up to their election promises and without exception each new government turn out to be worse than the previous one.

Parties are evaluated on the basis of their policy performance in government. If citizens evaluate their performance positively they will be returned to office, but if they are evaluated negatively the public support behind them disappears. This is exactly what has happened in Turkish politics. The centre-right parties, the MP the TPP and the centre-left SDPP and RPP were elected in different elections with considerable electoral support but none of these governments satisfied voters.

The Turkish party system jumped from cadre party to a catchall or cartel party by bypassing the mass party phase. Perhaps this is where most of the problems with the Turkish party system lie.⁹³ Due to the constant upheavals such as military interventions, the closure of the parties and interruption of the political system since 1960, Turkish politics has become unrepresentative and unresponsive.⁹⁴ In a country where the party fragmentation, electoral volatility and party dealignment has been high, then the role of party organisations, and their campaigns becomes crucial in influencing voter's electoral preferences.

It appears that Turkish parties have lost touch with the people. They have no means of establishing/setting and maintaining direct contact with potential voters. Except for the WP none of the Turkish parties has robust local organisations able to carry out year round party activities: going door -to- door to spread the party's message, ideology and policies and above all listening to people for feedback. Their organisations have simply not been organised as the local branches of a mass party. They lack staff and have very low membership, ideological conviction or enthusiasm. Since they are not ideological parties, members lack any meaningful reasons to join the party in the first place and become party activists. Unlike the WP's grassroots activists, the majority of them act with the instinct of maximising their interests,

⁹² For the data on economic variables see Chapter, 4.

⁹³ Özbudun, 2000, p. 99.

⁹⁴ See The Economist, 16 May 2001.

receiving some sort of benefit either material or otherwise, such as finding a job, receiving services or favour from the party.

The current chapter has shown that mainstream political parties on the centre-right and left have been losing their appeal to society. They weakened in terms of organisational strength and electoral support. Also, there has been widespread disillusionment and decline in party identification and party attachment. All but one the WP/VP, with its vast very well organised grassroots organisations, has emerged as the major winner of this process. The WP/VP by advocating social policies like *Adil Duzen* (Just Society) became to represent the majority and most valnurable sections of society the lower middle and lower classes. Its clean, uncorrupted image has also helped enormously to its rising popularity among a different section of society.

What is important to underline again here is that in an atmosphere of high volatility, fragmentation and decline in party attachment, party organisations and their campaigning assume a critical influence on the electoral outcome. It is obvious that, when partisan attachments have weakened it becomes easier to influence voters through campaigns at the local and national levels.

CHAPTER THREE

FROM A MOVEMENT TO A POLITICAL PARTY:

CHANGING CONTOURS OF POLITICAL ISLAM

3.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter I examined the contours of the Turkish party system from early 1980 to 2000 in line with global changes in socioeconomic and political spheres. I examined the causes of the decline of Turkish political party system. I identified the organizational characteristics of the major parties and party policies and governmental performances. Apart from the WP/VP, Turkish parties have declined for various reasons. In this chapter I concentrate specifically on the WP/VP.

I examine the preconditions from which the Islamist movement emerged and then the process of the transformation of Islamist movements into a political party in 1970.⁹⁵ Following this section I examine electoral performance, party structures and major policies of all of the Islamist parties from the NOP to the VP. The last objective of this chapter is to identify the continuities and discontinuities throughout the last three decades and articulate the rationale behind the party changes in Turkey.

The ideology of Islamism emerged from the mid nineteenth century and various internal and external factors prepared emerge of it. In this respect Islamism as an ideology first appeared in the periphery (in India) of the Ottoman Empire in the mid nineteenth century but then moved to the centre from 1870s. There were at least two axis for this

⁹⁵ For a short review of social movements see Castells M, 1976 p.151; Diani M, Porta D 1999; Roots, C 1990; Rucht D, Porta D 1999; Pakulski J 1991, 1995, pp.55-87; Pickvance C, 1976, 1995, pp.123-146 and Touraine A, 1981

movement one was the intellectuals and elite who advocated Islamism as a World view. Second axis was the ordinary masses that -although could not formulated and ideology -were in search of an 'Islamic Order' (Mardin, Ş 1995: 11-12). We should recall that beside the Islamist ideology there were other two Westernists, and Turkists Nationalists which all engaged a fierce competition with each other.⁹⁶ According to Islamists the weakness and decline of the Ottoman Empire was due to the abandonment of Islam. For them un-Islamic way of life and lack of Islamic mentality was the real reason for the Empire's decline. If this backwardness was the result of the un-Islamic governance the cure must be Islamization itself. If the Ottoman Empire wanted to be developed, civilised, prospered and glamorous it must return to Islam with its true meaning (Saribay, A. Y 1985: 60). In the main time it should be noted the majority of the Islamists, however, were moderate men who rose from the modern schools. For them the goal of modernisation can be achieved without losing religious and cultural heritage of Islam. They believed that the backwardness of the Islamic societies was not caused by the religion of Islam but due to deviations from it (Geyikdağı, M. Y., 1984: 33).

Especially during the second *Meşrutiyet* (1908) Islamism became one of the most widespread political ideology (Mardin, Ş 1995: 15-16; Saribay, A. Y 1985: 61). The reason for this was the Sultan Abdulhamid II' s pragmatic Islamisation policies. In fact he was the first Sultan who actually turned Islam into a political ideology to fight against the separatist and nationalist movements of the non -Muslim elements that engulfed the Empire from 1870s onwards. One of the most important external factors for the politicisation of Islam was the Germany's imperialist ambition in the Middle East.⁹⁷ However Islamism was a limited movement to save the Empire from further disintegration. Neither Abdulhamid II's Islamism, nor the German pan-Islamist aspirations were sufficient enough to mobilise the society as a whole around the Sultan and the Place.

According to Rustow (1991, p.10) over the 19th century Turkish political parties reflected significant changes and an underlying continuity in Turkey's political history.

⁹⁶ For a detailed account of the competing ideologies at the last quarter of the nineteenth century see Berkes, N (1964)

⁹⁷ See Saribay, A. Y. 1985: 62.

Not surprisingly today's major modern parties have their origins in the events that took place in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Although the roots of the Islamic movement go back to the nineteenth century it was the last quarter of the twentieth century when it was transformed into a political party.

3.2 First Generation Islamist Parties: The National Order Party & The National Salvation Party, 1970-1980

The Islamist movement was transformed into a modern political party at the beginning of the 1970s and the first Islamist party the *Milli Nizam Partisi* (National Order Party-NOP) was established on 26 January 1970.⁹⁸ It was an organised reaction by various sections of society that for various reasons, were not able to fully integrate into the new social structure shaped by advancing industrial capitalism and was increasingly threatened by the advancement of Istanbul's big bourgeoisie.

By the 1960's the Turkish economy had reached a degree of capital accumulation and a certain degree of integration into the world economy, facilitating the transformation from commercial to industrial capitalism. No doubt this transformation was helped by the arrival of an entrepreneurial bourgeoisie, which was created, by and large, by the state. In other words the state acted as a 'surrogate mother' (Keyder, 1987). By the 1960's this new breed of bourgeoisie started to worry the Anatolian petit bourgeoisie town merchants, artisans, small shopkeepers, and small tradesmen in the hinterlands of Anatolia. In this sense the 1960s marked a new era. As Ahmed (1993: 376) argued:

The Sixties marked the beginning of a process of transformation from commercial to industrial capitalism. This process required major reforms such as reform of agriculture and taxation, which the landowner and the privileged classes naturally resisted. It also jeopardized the livelihood of the Anatolian artisans and merchants who could not compete with large-scale industry and enterprises. To make matters worse, this petit bourgeoisie felt equally threatened from below by the militancy and organisation of the unions, especially after the formation of the WPT that carried the working-class cause into Anatolia (1993, p. 376).

⁹⁸ See Sarıbay, A.Y 1985: 99

Islamist reaction to the secular establishment came as a consequence of economic modernisation and the increased division of labour. As industrial production intensified in the metropolitans of Turkey it begun to disturb the livelihood of the traditional artisans and merchants who had been producing and trading locally in a manner unchanged for centuries. However, industrial production had become cheaper and available in vast quantities. Production in far away factories, some times abroad, had become possible. So traditional production was unable to compete and many local producers became bankrupt.

Yücekök (1971, pp. 175-178) pointed out that Islamism emerged as the ideology of resistance, a tool of rebellion against the modernising secular establishment. Due to rapid social change that resulted from industrialisation, mass migration and urbanisation, religious ideology emerged as an anchor for displaced and distressed migrant masses. In circumstances where rapid social change occurs, religious values and networks offer a sense of continuity and a communal identity that had been lost, as well as a sanctuary from uncertainties, risks, threats and anxieties brought about by modernisation.

Unsurprisingly, the reaction to this assertive industrial capitalism was strongest in the less developed regions. Election results in the 1970s had confirmed that the NOP was very popular in the poorest regions and districts.⁹⁹ The NSP performed very well in its first election contests and received 11.8 per cent of the total votes and won 48 seats in parliament (Saribay, A.Y. 1985, p. 144). It was a decisive moment in Turkish electoral history. For the first time an Islamist party became popular but also it showed that as a result of rapid urbanisation a new political cleavage was emerging in the cities. With urbanisation voting behaviour changed.

The emergence of the NSP can be viewed as the fragmentation and polarisation of the Turkish bourgeoisie along economic interests.¹⁰⁰ By the 1960s capitalist development brought two sections of the bourgeoisie to a head-to-head collision. The Anatolian “petit bourgeoisie” was united under the banner of Islam against the advancing “big

⁹⁹ The regional disparity and party preferences are examined in detail in chapter 5. The NSP had 11.8 per cent of the total votes in 1973 elections across Turkey but its electoral support rose as high as 33.0 per cent in less developed districts.

¹⁰⁰ See *ibid*, p. 99.

bourgeoisie". In addition to the clash of interests between two factions of the bourgeoisie the process of modernization sparked a popular reaction, which transformed into a fully-fledged Islamist movement in the 1960s. Thus Islamist ideology was a consequence of the process of modernisation itself, whilst at the same time being a reaction against modernisation taking place since the 1920s.

With the advancement of capitalism big business developed ties with the western world often becoming the local subsidiaries of western companies. This development simultaneously squeezed out the small merchants, traditional artisans, small tradesmen and shopkeepers. Necmettin Erbakan the founder of the NOP expressed the grievances of the small Anatolian entrepreneurs:

The economic mechanism has been working for the advantage of the big city traders. The Anatolian tradesmen feel like orphans. Three to four large city traders have taken the lion's share of the import quotas... It is the people of Anatolia who put the money into the bank accounts but this money is being given to big city traders as credit... The chambers of commerce have become the vehicle of a small comprador-mason group. This great institution has been under the control of comprador trade and industry. Therefore we said we shall join the administrative committee to make it an institution that serves the Anatolian trader and industrialist as well" [my translation], (Quoted in Saribay, 1985, pp. 98-99).

Erbakan complains about the unequal relations set by the economic mechanism dominated by the big city traders. It is not difficult to imagine how the Anatolian petit bourgeoisie increasingly became vulnerable to modern industrial production-industrial capitalism and increased capital accumulation from the early 1960s. Threatened by the big industrial capitalists the Anatolian bourgeoisie needed to organise around a political party to protect its very existence, and the NOP was the product of this process.

The social base of the NOP later called the NSP was not just limited to the petit bourgeoisie but included support from some traditionally religious sections of the society, the old ulema (Scholars), small farmers, and migrant workers who had not integrated into the urban life in the big cities. ¹⁰¹

¹⁰¹ For a detailed account of the social base of the WP/VP see chapter 4.

The establishment of the NOP cannot only be attributed to capitalist development. Historical, cultural and external factors also played a very significant role. Islam played a major role in Ottoman times and in this context religion, in particular, 'has a unifying appeal for mass political mobilization.' Religion is, often, in many Third world countries, the only source of identity.¹⁰² Traditionally the Turkish Islamic movement developed parallel to the organisation of *tarikats* (brotherhoods).¹⁰³ For instance, Mehmed Zahid Kotku the leader of very influential *İskender Paşa Dergahı* - one of the leading brotherhoods in Turkey- actively encouraged and supported the establishment of the NOP. The majority of Nurcus – Nurcu brotherhood- joined the NOP in the early days of its foundation (Çakır, 1994, p.21).¹⁰⁴

Foreign governments have also used Islam for their own strategic interests. The 'green belt' strategy was developed by strategists like Zbigniew Brzezinski in the US to stop the expansion of the USSR in the Middle East and South Asia in the 1950s and 60s. The project was based on encirclement of the Soviet Union with a green belt of Islam against communism in Muslim countries such as Iran, Iraq, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Turkey.¹⁰⁵ There was a parallel development to this project. The governments of various parties openly or discreetly encouraged, supported or directly organised religious organisations such as the 'Association to Combat Communism' as early as 1962 and presented Islam as the antidote to communism.

The Saudi connection was crucial for its provision of resources for religious organisations to finance their multiple activities throughout the country.¹⁰⁶ Ironically the Saudi Arabian connection was strengthened after the military intervention in 1980. It developed to an extent that the Saudis were allowed to pay the salaries of the Turkish İmams (priests) in Western European countries.¹⁰⁷ Nevertheless it was internal conditions that led to the emergence and rise of political Islam. One of them

¹⁰² The role of religion in politics is explained in Chapter 5. Even in developed, industrialised societies religion has been a major variable influencing the political process. Apart of the religious revivalism in a global scale since the 1970s, religion is often the only ideology for the opposition in Muslim countries. See also Toprak, 1987, p. 219.

¹⁰³ Şaylan, 1992, p. 154).

¹⁰⁴ Also see Çalışlar, 1995, pp.25-26; Şaylan, 1992, pp.154-158; Yalçın, 1999.

¹⁰⁵ For a detailed account of the project of 'green belt' see: Çalışlar, O (1995); Çakır, R (1994); Hunter, S. H (1995:21); Kürkçü, E (1996); Tuşalp, E (1994); Yalçın, S (1999).

¹⁰⁶ See Şaylan, G (1992: 237).

¹⁰⁷ For a detailed analysis of Saudi connections, see Mumcu, U (1996: 138),

was the usage of religion as a counter-force against an imagined “communist threat” in the political arena until the late 1980s. This process started from 1947 with the RPP’s seventh congress to DP governments from 1950 to 1960 and continued with the 1972 military ultimatum and military coup of 12 September 1980. In fact the latest military government had employed the most enduring policy, with the help of right wing intellectuals and specifically the *Aydınlar Ocağı* (Club of Intellectuals). They developed a new official ideology called *Türk İslam Sentezi* (Turkish Islamic synthesis) based on Islam and Turkish nationalism.¹⁰⁸

3.2.1 Ideology and Party Policies of the NOP/NSP

Ideology as an institution of superstructure reflects the socio-economic conditions in a society at a given time. The NOP was undoubtedly in favour of the re-Islamisation of Turkish social life (Mardin, Ş 1991: 136). In its foundation manifesto the decline of the Ottoman Empire was blamed for the abandonment of religious and national values local traditions, customs and Islamic ethics -that once made the nation one of the greatest civilizations-. To reverse this decline and make the Turkish nation once more a proud, world-class nation, what was needed was the protection of the Islamic identity and ethic: loyalty to Islamic and national values and material and spiritual development supported by the law and democratic order (Sarıbay, 1985, p. 101).

Shortly after the closure of the NOP in 1972 the same cadres established the National Salvation Party (NSP). The ideology of the NSP was a continuation of at least a century old debate over Islam and the West. (Toprak, 1987, p. 227). Like the NOP the NSP stressed that the decline of the Ottoman Empire had been caused by the abandonment of Islamic civilization in favour of the western one. It was argued that:

Our nation that once was one of the greatest in history that founded a model civilization, enlightened humanity and governed the world was also ahead of the West in terms of material conditions. It was far ahead in the areas of science, technology, natural sciences, teaching and training. Especially our ethical-moral superiority, which was the keystone of the basis of all of our success... Those western nations that could not topple our nation from outside tried it from within for centuries and finally succeeded it. They who wanted to

¹⁰⁸ There have been numerous of articles and books written on Turkish-Islamic Synthesis. See Güvenç B., Şaylan, G., et al (1994) , *Türk İslam Sentezi* (Turkish –Islam Synthesis), Sarmal Yayınevi, İstanbul; also see Şaylan, G (1992: 111).

divert our nation from its own consciousness and erode its ethical and moral practices to destroy our nation have been successfully doing it from within for a few centuries. Those cosmopolitan and non Islamic movements which surfaced in the Tanzimat period and became legitimate day by day caused moral as well as material decline and led to the collapse of our great Empire in a short time' [my translation].¹⁰⁹

The NSP adopted an exclusive *Milli Görüş* (national view) ideology, a reaction of the small Anatolian bourgeoisie against capitalist developments in the 1960s. Also, this ideology was a reaction to the process of Turkish modernisation and its implications in social and political life. It can be said that the NSP as its predecessor has two important ideological components of industrialisation and Islamisation, which are both the least changed dimensions of the national view (*Milli Görüş*) since the 1970s.

The first chairman of the National Salvation Party Süleyman Arif Emre described the *milli görüş* as:

Our constitution gives the responsibility to the state to prepare the conditions in which every individual would develop himself or herself materially and spiritually. Our party puts this principle at the centre, and aims to plan the material and spiritual developments evenly. The leftist and liberal ideologies that give first priority to material development by neglecting the spiritual side are far from fulfilling the nation's needs. [My translation] ¹¹⁰

It seems the *Millie Gurus* (National View) yearn for a balance between the material and spiritual worlds, however what constituted this balance was controversial. The advocates of the national view argued that since the 1920s the ruling elite had abandoned national and sacred values in favour of western values. Material and economic development and modernisation became the only goal. What they were opposing was the abandonment or neglect of spiritual development, considering that if someone is overly concerned with the materialistic aspects of life he will neglect his duties towards God. This view can be interpreted from another perspective as well. The process of modernisation, especially in the rapidly expanding cities, brings confusion and stress.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁹ See Milli Nizam Partisi Kuruluş Beyannamesi, Ankara, 1970, p. 3 4 (quoted in Sarıbay, 1985, p. 100).

¹¹⁰ See MSP Genel Başkanı Süleyman Arif Emre nin I. Büyük Kongreyi Açış Konuşması, Ankara, 1973, s. 5/ 6 (Quoted in Sarıbay, A. Y 1985: 110-111).

¹¹¹ See N. Erbakan (1975: 29-40), Quoted in Sarıbay, A. Y 1985: 111-113.

3.2.2 The Main Policies

In its definition of secularisation the Milli Görüş (national view) used the official definition of secularism, which was misunderstood in the first place. So secularism defined is as 'the dictatorship of unbelievers over believers'.¹¹² Islamists have always condemned the West for its Imperialist attitudes towards the Ottoman Empire. Inescapably, the NSP's foreign policies too reflected its view on past relations between the Empire and Western Europe. In its programme, the NSP also blamed the west for causing the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and equally opposed Turkey's close relations with Europe since the establishment of the republic in 1923.

The EEC was seen as an extension of western imperialism that caused the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. For the NSP the EEC was formed by Zionist circles within large amount of capital whose goal was to profit from it. The NSP declared: "[the EEC] has aims and activities that are beyond economic goals." For example it requires that all member states must allow foreigners to purchase land. It will allow those Zionists all over the world to buy much land from Turkey for their malign plan. It would end up making Turkey an eyelet of Israel. Zionists and the West want Turkey to join the EEC for their imperialist aims.'¹¹³

In terms of party membership the NOP/NSP had a very restrictive attitude. According to the NOP's constitution there were a set of requirements for membership. Those aspirants must be Turkish citizens, should not be prohibited from politics, must be over 18 years old and non- Mason. One of the most noticeable general restrictions was against those people who were members of Masonic lodges. Those aspirants should indicate that they genuinely accepted party principles, were respectful of spiritual values and had a good reputation.

The party charter allowed those who do not regularly pray (*namaz*) or fast but they could not fill any administrative positions (Yalçın, 1999, p. 51). There was another

¹¹² Saribay, 1985, p.118.

¹¹³ See *ibid*, p. 127.

restriction that was not written in its charter: the anti-communist stand. Those who were suspected of being communists were not accepted as members. These two restrictions against “masons” and “communists” were erased in the NSP’s programme. It was no longer written in on the programme but remained in practice.

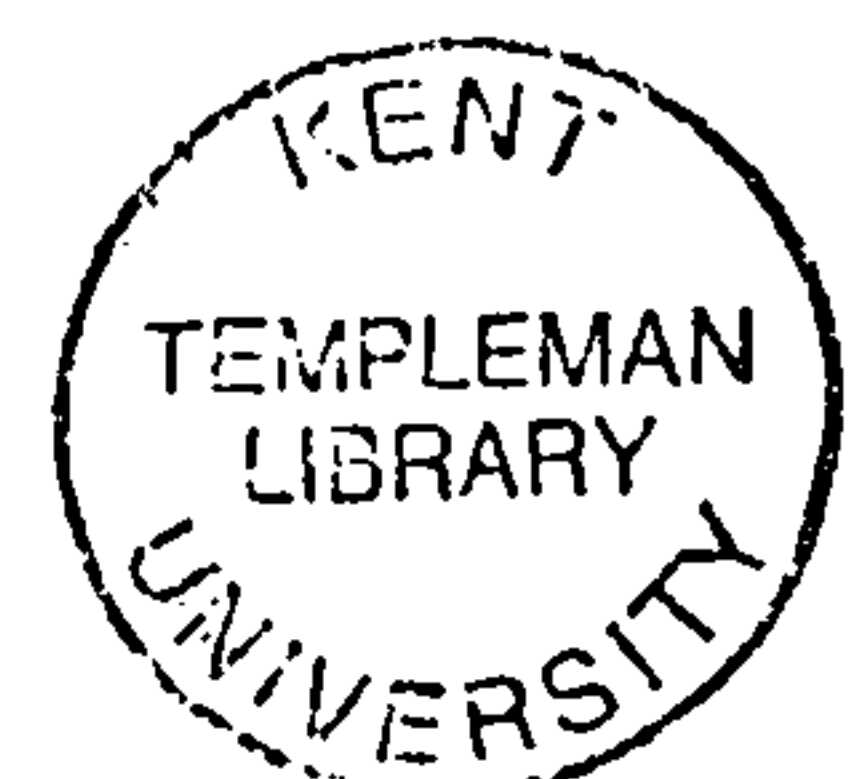
In conclusion the transformation of the Turkish economy from commercial to industrial capitalism that took place throughout the 1960s, changed the face of Turkey and led to an increase in social and political polarisation. The emergence of the pro-Islamic party was a result of this polarisation within the bourgeoisie class. Although the quarrel between these two sections of the bourgeoisie - petit bourgeois and big bourgeoisie- was about economics, the petty bourgeoisie chose to have an ideology that was by and large constructed from traditional and religious values. In this respect the NSP made good use of the Ottoman heritage sometimes by refining, other times by redefining or even by mystifying it. The NSP propaganda concentrated around the importance of “morals and virtue,” and it opposed secularism within the legal boundaries.

The NOP’s main aim was Islamisation of cultural and political life in Turkey. It proposed Islamisation of private and public life as well. The reason for Turkey’s underdevelopment and cultural degeneration was seen to be secularisation and westernisation. The program of the party of *Milli Görüş* was industrialisation and development of closer relations with Muslim countries chiefly Saudi Arabia. The NOP opposed Turkey’s membership to the EEC. Instead it wanted to establish an Islamic Common Market, which opposed usury. The condition of national development was to return to Islamic values. To this end education had to be reorganised with a national and religious orientation.¹¹⁴

3.3 The Welfare Party (WP), 1983-1998

When the Islamist movement was transformed into a political party in the early 1970s it continued to exist as a movement but also formed other parties under different names. This trend has continued since the beginning of the 1970s. When the NOP

¹¹⁴ See *ibid*: 50.



closed down because of its 'anti-secular' activities the NSP was founded shortly after in 1972. The same trend continued with the establishment of the Refah (Welfare) party when the NSP was closed and after Refah's closure in 1998 the Fazilet (Virtue) party.

When the military government allow the establishment of new political parties the old cadres of the NSP to founded the *Refah Partisi* (Welfare Party) under the leadership of Ali Turkmen a lawyer, and ex-advocate of N. Erbakan, and 33 founding members in 1983. Due to N. Erbakan's prison sentence and ten years prohibition from politics, Ahmet Tekdal, a close aide of Erbakan became its first leader. The WP had to find survival strategies under the military's scrutiny. It could not say it was a totally new party, but if it openly admitted it was continuation of the NSP this could have jeopardised its survival. So the WP highlighted the slogans like *Milli Görüş* (National View) and *Milli Şuur* (National Consciousness). These terms sent a message that it was continuing in the tradition of the NOP and NSP (Çakır, 1994, p. 24).

The Turkish constitution bans (article 163) any political party 'exploiting' religion for political purposes and prohibits any closed party from reopening either with the same name or under a different name. In reality it is very difficult and technically almost impossible to decide whether or not party X is a continuation of party Y that was closed. However we can see this struggle between trying to pose as a totally new party on the one hand and the very same party, a mere change of name from NSP to RP (WP) on the other. The choice of the name for the new party "**Refah**" literally meaning **welfare** or **prosperity** signalled the continuity of the NOP/NSP in this new party. Şen (1995, pp.8-9) pointed out that: "...despite the fact that the WP inherited the political heritage of the NSP its theory, rhetoric and its social bases have significantly changed." According to Yavuz (1997) although there is some continuity between the NSP and the WP, the difference was greater than Şen says. The NSP represented those who were not fully integrated culturally and economically into the "modernist" centre. So it saw Islam as the remedy to cure the social problems, and aimed to return to traditional social and cultural life. In contrast, he argues the WP modernises traditional norms and institutions by breathing new life into them (1997, p. 70). The WP transforms the traditional norms and institutions with its modernist and secular characteristics. Perhaps this major change was due to the development of

capitalism and the expansion of the modern and secular schooling across the country that contributed to the emergence of a new generation of Islamist elite.

In terms of organisational characteristics, ideology, specific party policies and the social bases, the WP is different from its predecessors the NOP/NSP. As pointed out earlier the WP/VP is the only modern mass political party. It has a nationwide, effective party organisation with a large, highly committed and active party membership.¹¹⁵

3.3.1 The Program and Basic Principles of the WP

At the beginning of its program the WP explicitly declared its loyalty to the republic, democracy, constitution and principles of Atatürk.¹¹⁶ The main goal of the party is to elevate the nation above the level of contemporary civilisations. 'In order to do so:

- i) we will make sure that every corner of our country is developed and fully built.
- ii) Cultural and spiritual development will be encouraged.
- iii) All our national characters and features will be in perspective while these developments take place'. (Ibid: 36). Among its main goals the WP made connections, though implicit, with its past especially with the ideology of the Milli Görüş (national view). There were, however, some efforts made to distance themselves from the traditional National View such as putting democratisation, freedom of thought and expression high on the programme.

Our party will strive to establish democracy in its true sense and create a full national representation. We oppose any idea and action that obstructs the normal function of the governance of the republic. Our party believes in the freedom of thought, expression and conscience. We consider any attempt to repress these rights as primitive and against secularism. (ibid: 36).

Despite the fact that the WP tried to distance itself from its past, at the core of its ideology was the traditional ideology of the Milli Görüş (national view). The reason for this was that the party elite 'inner circle', both the traditionalists so called *Aksağlılar* (elders) and *Yenilikçiler* (progressivists), came from the *Milli Görüş*

¹¹⁵ For some elaboration see chapter 2.

¹¹⁶ See RP Tüzük ve Programı (WP's Program and Principles), Ankara, 1985: 35-36.

Teskilati (Organisation of National View): that many call the party academy. It was the only ideology to which they were strongly attached. The National View and the Just Society were indispensable concepts for the WP. The centrality of the national view as the core ideology of the WP was admitted openly in a 1991 election manifesto.¹¹⁷ Nevertheless, rhetoric of the traditional national view did not prevent the WP grasping social and economic changes and developing its strategy and tactics to win the sympathy of the wider electoral bases. The steady rise of the WP's electoral support has proven this argument.

In its fourth congress (10 October 1994) Erbakan, the leader of the WP, announced the agenda of the WP government: 1) Clean government; 2) Return to the Milli Görüş (national view); 3) Spiritual development; 4) Establishment of the Just order, which included a Just economic order and real pluralist democracy 5) De-centralisation and strengthening of local government 6) An end to the state's economic interventions and activities; 7) Reforms in security; 8) Reforms in the judiciary and legal system and; 9) Preventing the deterioration of the natural environmental balance.¹¹⁸

3.3.2 The Unstoppable Rise of the WP

The increasing public support manifested itself in the local elections of 26 March 1989. In this election 2,170,365 people (9.8 per cent) voted for Refah. Its vote share had risen to just under the national threshold of 10 per cent. Refah won the municipalities of Konya, Şanlıurfa, Sivas, Van and Kahramanmaraş, plus 46 other sub-districts (ilçe) municipalities. (Soner, 1999, p.193).

The early general elections of 20 October 1991 were a turning point for the Refah party. This time 4,121,355 people voted for the WP. Its share of the votes increased to 16.2 per cent and for the first time since the military coup of 1980, the party won 62 seats in parliament.¹¹⁹ When the NWP and RDP's share of the votes were taken out

¹¹⁷ See 20 Ekim 1991 Seçim Beyannamesi (The Election Manifesto 20 October 1991), Ankara. (1991: 73),

¹¹⁸ Çakır, R 1994:195.

¹¹⁹ In this election fearing they would not achieve the 10 per cent national threshold the WP's leadership devised an alliance with two right wing parties the ultra nationalist *Milliyetçi Çalışma Partisi* MÇP (Nationalist Work Party) (later became the NAP) and *Islahatçı Demokrasi Partisi* IDP (Reformist Democracy Party RDP).

the WP's share of the votes was 13.1 per cent, an increase of over 4 per cent with 42 seats in parliament.¹²⁰

One of the reasons for the WP's good election result in 1991 was the change of the traditional propaganda style adopted during the election campaigning. The WP has one of the best organised, grassroots organisations.¹²¹

As Ayata observed from the early 1990s the WP added two new dynamic forces into its grassroots army. The women and youth active participation in election campaigning made an extraordinary contribution to the electoral success of the WP.¹²² The WP's grassroots organisations were very adept at recruiting new members and convincing potential voters. With this new era the women members who were organised under the so-called *Hanımlar Komisyonulari* (Ladies Commissions). They persistently and skilfully toured neighbourhoods and did building-by-building, door-by-door vote canvassing. This method proved very successful for several reasons. Chiefly, while men work, women have time to visit their female neighbours to chat and canvas. Also women have better access to households, as they are socially more trusted and are in a better position to persuade other women.

As Oral Çalışlar observed, before the 1991 general elections, the WP changed its traditional election campaign style. For example for the first time they placed unveiled women on propaganda posters. The candidates paid attention to give modern messages. For the first time in this election the WP used issues and slogans that the left had been using for a very long time. In their election posters, in addition to the modern looking ladies, the portraits of workers struggling for rights, sex workers, and intellectuals opposed to oppression and torture, and environmental activists frequently

¹²⁰ See Kalaycıoğlu, 1998, p. 3.

¹²¹ The WP's well organised grassroots activism have been observed by many students of Turkish politics. For some of them are: Ayata, 1997, p. 52; Berkey, 1996, p. 45; Çakır, 1994, pp. 216-232; Darnton, 1995; Kalaycıoğlu, 1994; Şen, 1995, pp. 82- 91.

¹²² See Ayata, S (1997: 52).

appeared. It was as if the traditional religious party had gone and in its place a modern party emerged. No doubt it was a very important step for the WP. While doing this, Refah on the one hand was trying to preserve its traditional administration and ideology, and on the other, it was trying to reach out to new voters giving a modern, urban message. Those who knew the party could see that there was a struggle within the party to modernize it (Çalışlar, 1995, pp. 56-57).

By the 1990s political Islam was the fastest growing political force in Turkey. Welfare Party became the largest political party within a relatively short time, increasing its share of the vote from under 10 per cent (9.8 per cent) in 1989 to 24 per cent in the local election in 1994, which was a turning point in Turkish political history. One year later, with the general elections of the 24th December 1995 Refah's success continued attaining 21.4 per cent of the total vote and gaining more seats (158 out of 550) than any mainstream secularist party.¹²³

3.3.3 The Social Bases of the WP: Changes and Continuities

There have been continuities in terms of the regional bases of the pro-Islamic parties NOP/NSP/WP and VP. According to statistical data collected since the early 1970s the Islamist parties NOP/NSP had been very popular in the less developed regions of Central Anatolia, East, South East and Northern Black sea regions.¹²⁴ The WP, especially in its early years continued to have the same electoral support from these less developed regions.

The election results of the last three decades showed that traditional artisans, merchants, tradesmen and shopkeepers, plus traditionally religious sections of the society, reminiscent of the Ottoman clerical class, the Mosque community, some religious brotherhoods, and Sufi orders, supported the NOP/NSP. However in the nineties due to rapid urbanisation and migration, its support base changed. The urban poor from growing gecekondu also started to support the WP.

¹²³ See *Milletvekili Genel Seçim Sonuçları* 24.12.1995 (Results of General Election of Representatives) State Institute of Statistics, Printing Division, November 1996, Ankara.

¹²⁴ For a comparison see tables in Çakır R 1994: 218, 220 and 222

It would not be wrong to argue that among the Turkish political parties it was the WP's cadres who read correctly the swiftly changing needs of Turkish society in the early 1990s. As a result of the economic restructuring programmes rural migration accelerated and the population balance shifted from rural to urban. This rapid mass migration soon exhausted industry and formal sector capacity. This unabsorbed population contributed to the growth of *gecekondus* encircling all of the big cities where, in effect, more than half of the urban population live. It was the WP who saw the problem and developed policies and a political rhetoric that addressed the social, cultural and economic problems of the *gecekondus* masses. It gave the new migrants an identity, and an avenue where they could participate in politics; they could air their opinions and express their grievances against the establishment. In the meantime the left responded too slowly to the changes and needs of the masses. In this respect the WP's economic programme the so-called Adil Düzen (Just Order), appealed to the urban poor, especially the *gecekondus* population.

The WP's support has shifted from traditional, rural bases to more modern, dynamic forces in the cities. Çakır observed that before the 1991 general elections the WP's meetings were thronged by thousands of young people wearing rubber boots, dirty jeans, long haired, looking like spectators at a local football match with plastic ribbons around their necks and arms. An Islamist writer Mehmet Metiner described the WP's election strategy in Istanbul as the "siege of Istanbul" by the rural poor (1994: 80). Çakır added "you could see some of these young people in Metallica concerts too". The WP was no longer a party that limited itself to traditional humble sections of society.

The WP's electoral appeal for support was wide ranging. It included retired military officers, ex-models, unveiled, modern dressed successful women such as the dentist Filiz Ergun as well as members of the minority Alevi sect.¹²⁵ By doing that the WP wanted to expand its electoral support to the non religious, secular sections of society.¹²⁶ In this manner it was determined to get people to vote for the WP. Before

¹²⁵ See Çalışlar, 1995, pp. 58-60;

¹²⁶ See Berkey, H 1996, p. 45; Çakır, R 1994, p. 216-232; Darnton, J 1995; Kalaycıoğlu, E 1994; Şen, S 1995, p. 82-91.

the 1994 elections, they made a very courageous effort, like targeting Alevis.¹²⁷ Alevis, for many good reasons, have certain reservations about any right wing or religious party, but the WP's move showed how it was determined to broaden its electoral base. Similarly the WP wanted to expand its ties with the army to prove that if it got a majority of the vote the army would let them come to power. In its fourth congress in 1993, 35 retired army officers joined the WP. It was a very big event, a showcase to demonstrate that good relations were developing with the army.¹²⁸

3.3.4 The Moment of Party Change: From Cadre Party to Mass Party

Katz and Mair (1995, pp. 2-28) identified four models of party: elite (cadre), mass, catchall, and cartel parties. What do most of the Turkish political parties look like? How can we classify them by using this format? According to Özbudun (2000, p.86) "Most Turkish parties combine some characteristics of cadre and catchall parties, with some elements of cartel parties." With the exception of the WP Turkish parties have never gone through a mass party phase. "Organizationally, the WP is the only Turkish party that comes close to the model of a mass party, or a party of social integration." Nevertheless the WP lacks intra party democracy. (Ibid, p. 92). Despite this the WP managed to distance itself from other mainstream parties by becoming a mass party, which was a positive development, a good example for the improvement of Turkish democracy. As Heper (1997, p. 37) points out:

Since the mid-1990s, the RP [WP] has attained political legitimacy and, in turn, has adopted the procedural rules of democracy, i.e. those designating the constitutional means of competing for and holding political office. The party has also adopted an increasingly more secular platform and political strategies aimed at expanding its political base of support.

¹²⁷ Alevi is a non-Sunni much more liberal Islamic sect. It is believed that Alevis make around 20 to 25 per cent of the Turkish population. Historically, there has been tension between these two sects. Since the 1920s Alevis have overwhelmingly supported the Kemalist revolution and his modernisation project, especially the principle of secularisation. From the early years of the republic they have supported the RPP, established by Atatürk, which became the party of the centre. Secularism is very important for Alevis, for they believe they would be prosecuted or oppressed because of their beliefs if the country were run by the Sharia (Islamic law) or a non-secularist government. That is why it was such an unlikely move by the WP to try convince the Alevi population to vote for the pro-Islamic WP.

¹²⁸ See Yalçın, 1999, pp.228-230.

This new approach was a result of a strategy change the party took in its fourth grand congress in October 1993. This change was in fact advocated by the *Yenilikçiler* (innovators) and helped to extend its social base (ibid, p. 37).

Compared to its predecessors, the NOP and NSP, the WP made great efforts to transform itself from an ideological cadre party, as it was in the 1970s and 1980s, to a mass party from the early 1990s until its closure. The leadership of the WP had to make a historical but pragmatic decision, knowing very well there was no chance of acquiring the power with an electoral support of between 8 and 12 percent, which came from brotherhoods. For this reason the leadership preferred to direct a mass party with a religious flavour (Kışlalı, 1995, p. 186).

The struggle for change within the WP entered a new phase with its fourth congress, held 10 October 1994. The WP completed its restoration and decided whether it was going to continue to be an extension of the NSP or become a party in its own right, for the 1990s. It was entering a new period where its theory and practices were distinct from the NSP (Şen, 1995, p.115). The fourth congress was a sign of its growing confidence. The leadership felt that the WP had proven itself with the local elections victory in 1994. They decided to extend this tactic to the general elections and come to power. For that reason Erbakan said: "From now until the day that the WP came to power we call this "the period of taking power" (Quoted in ibid: 115). To do that, the WP's leadership needed to broaden its appeal.

3.3.5 The Major Policies

One of the best indicators of a party's characteristics is its membership policy. As Cord et al (1974, p.305) point out, political parties are either "open" or "closed" in their membership requirements. Broad-based parties are more relaxed about membership criteria, keeping an open door to anyone who wishes to join. The "closed", elitist parties carefully screen prospective members, and behave like an exclusive country club.

With the WP the old NSP's perception of membership had changed from a truly "closed" elitist organisation to an "open" party. The stringent membership policies had changed. Members were not expected to be devoted Muslims with an Islamic life style who prayed five times a day, non smokers, abstaining from alcohol with a reference from a religious brotherhood or *Sufi* order. As one of my informants put it "the party used to be like a small community, a family business but with the Refah it became like a company opened up to the market/to everyone"¹²⁹ They were not expected first to be good Muslims but to develop an "*identity of Refahlılık*" (Welfareism). This identity is a secularist one with an Islamic makes up. (Çakır, 1994, p. 59).

In the policy sphere *Adil Düzen* was the crowning glory of the Refah Party. Many mistakenly interpreted this Just Order as merely the economic policies of the WP but it was part of an important social project that included social and political dimensions. Although the *Adil Düzen* has been much discussed and written about, it has never been clear what it really was. According to an Islamist writer Akgül (1997, p.38) the Just Order is a project prepared by a elite group of Turkish and foreign experts. Its aim is to achieve a "social balance" in the image of the "natural balance" and unite Islam with humanity. Under the Just Order all people from different religions, ethnic groups and social classes will live in peace and harmony. Every fundamental right and freedom will be granted and protected for all. The Just Order is an original Islamic, scientific and humanistic project. (Ibid: 42). He says that there will be four different but coherent, interconnected but distinct orders within the state. These are: 1) Just Economic Order; 2) Just Political Order; 3) Just Scientific Order and; 4) Just Moral Order (Ibid: 43-44).

Erbakan describes the current economic system as the "system of slavery". "This slavery system has been oppressing millions of people under economic hardship, poverty, unemployment and under development. This system has been robbing the rights and incomes of these millions of people and transferring it to a small minority group of imperialists, world Zionists and their collaborators. As a result the majority gets poorer while a small minority becomes richer and richer. This situation has been

¹²⁹ See Nizam Demir's Interview

causing social unrest in those countries and threatens security and peace in the world.”¹³⁰ He defines five *microbes* (germs) in this slavery system responsible for the present situation. These are: interest, unjust tax, the mint, exchange and credit” (Ibid, pp. 3-4). For him the Just Order is a “complete and eclectic” system. He says it contains useful elements of communism and capitalism but has no place for negative aspects of either system. (Ibid, p. 17). But the meaning and content of the Just Order has never been fully explained.

According to the WP the Turkish economy is dependent on the US and those institutions, which are controlled by the US such as the IMF and World Bank. The profit acquired from Turkey through these institutions has allegedly been transferred to the World Zionists (Çakır, 1994, p. 161).¹³¹

Erbakan (Quoted in ibid: 161) argued in a pamphlet in 1993 called ‘Turkeys Problems and Solutions’ “In this changing world all humanity is searching for an order that will bring peace and happiness all over the world. The order that has been sought is the Just Order, which the WP and the *Milli Görüş* (National Order) have been insisting on. Therefore now Turkey’s responsibility is to establish the Just Order as a good example.”

In the same pamphlet Erbakan, after criticising Turkey’s close ties with the West, outlined his plans in five steps to improve relations with Islamic countries. Those are:

- 1) The organisation of the Muslim Countries’ United Nations. (Islamic UN).
- 2) Foundation of the Muslim Military Forces. (Islamic NATO).
- 3) Union and Organisation of the Muslim Countries Common Economic Market (Islamic EEC)
- 4) The Common Currency of the Muslim Countries (Islamic Euro)
- 5) The Organisation of the Muslim Countries Cultural Relations (Islamic UNESCO/ERASMUS) (Ibid. 161-162).

¹³⁰ Erbakan, N (1991: 11-12 Quoted in Çakır 1994: 133-34) Adil Ekonomik Düzen (Just Economic Order) , Ankara .

¹³¹ Also, for an Islamic perspective on the WP’s foreign policies see Akgül, A (1997a).

One can see he was planning a series of countermeasures against what perceived as the Western domination. Those counter measures were to create a Community of United Muslim Countries. I will not discuss the nature and relevance of these plans but they elucidate the WP's ideal foreign policy. Although it softened its rhetoric against Zionism and Western Imperialism, it did oppose Turkey's NATO membership, and application for full membership of the EU. It fiercely criticised the Custom Union and declared it would renegotiate its terms and conditions.

Perhaps the most important change in the WP's program was the definition of secularism. It was defined for the first time as: "Secularism is not the enemy of religion, on the contrary it is a principle developed to safeguard the freedom of religion and conscience against any fraudulent attempts." (Ibid: 37; see also Soner, 1999, p.187). However reality is often different from words. It has been widely discussed whether the WP was a secularist or an Islamist fundamentalist party. Opinions are divided with some saying the WP is a secular organisation, putting the party before Islam. They argue that the WP actually brings its less secular followers into the modern and secular world. Çakır argues that although the WP looks, like a religious organisation externally, its organisational attitude can be classified as a secular one. The WP has a mechanism of making everyone first *Refahli* (People from WP). In effect the identity of the WP is that every member acquires a secular identity with an Islamic glitter (Çakır, 1994, pp. 51-59).

There are, of course, opposing opinions on this matter. Opponents argue that whatever the WP says about their loyalty to the principle of secularism they are lying. Once they come to power they will abandon secularism and make Turkey a theocracy like Iran, ruled by the Sharia.

3.4 The Virtue Party (VP), 1997- 2001

The social origins of the Turkish political parties goes back to the late years of the Ottoman Empire and, it seems, since then the socio-cultural cleavages have been playing a very important role in terms of the party preference and electoral behaviour. Although this cultural cleavage emerged a few centuries ago in the Ottoman Empire,

it especially became influential in electoral sphere in modern Turkish history (Kalaycıoğlu, E 1998, p.4).

The relations between different social classes are not as clear-cut as one might expect. In other words they overlaps and it makes the analysis of political life a bit difficult. Until the late 1960s Turkish politics revolved by and large around the axis of stateist elitist versus traditional-religious and liberals. It might be seen contradictory to have traditionalist /conservatives and liberals under the same umbrella as they are standing for very different political ideologies, but because of the defeat of the Ottoman empire and some other reasons these two groups were very weak. So in order to counter balance the stateist elites, which consisted of central bureaucracy and military elite and headed by M. Kemal had to stick with each other (See Kongar, E 1998, pp.131-133). Mardin (1973:169-91) argued that: “**centre-periphery**” relations provides a good explanatory scheme to comprehend Turkish politics.” Nur Yalman an outstanding student of Turkish culture points out that during the ‘beneficent period of 1838-1877, Ottoman society divided into two *kulturekamps*.¹³² The polarisation of the Ottoman society was accelerated by the reform period of 1838-1877, which is known as the *Tanzimat Donemi* (reformation period). The general characteristics of this two *kulturekamps* has been described as:

One side of the divide are those who adhere to an “image of Good Society” organized and ruled by means of rational thinking, science, and materialist-positivist understanding of universe, life, society and politics; and the other side cleavage are those who believe in an “image off Good Society” which espouses traditional (patrimonial) style of life, which in turn, is designed with a religious (Islamic) understanding of moral society, law, and politics. (Kalaycıoğlu, E 1998: 4).

On the one side of this ‘*kulturekamp*’ there is a rationalist, positivist materialistic world view and the “image of Good Society” for this group can only be achieved if the social, economic political and cultural life organised and ruled by rationality, science and materialist positivist principals. On the opposite side of this divide these who believes the “image of Good Society” is can only based on traditional style of life. In this society religion (Islam) dominates almost every aspects of social life.

It can be said that the divide of two *kulturekamps* have not been contained with the collapse of Ottoman empire but continued for more then a seventy years to dominate

¹³² Cited In Kalaycıoğlu, E 1998:4

the Turkish polity. (See Saribay, A.Y, 1991, p.122) There are many scholars who have suggested ever since that the Turkish political system is 'composed of a coherent and organised "state" elite that constitutes the **centre**, and pitted against it persists a culturally heterogeneous, complex, and even hostile **periphery**'¹³³ (Kalaycioglu, E 1994, p.403) Centre, obviously, represents the stateist elite consisted of civil and military bureaucracy and periphery represents the traditional/conservatives elements such as notables, big land lords, traditional merchants, town artisans, tradesman and the ulama the religious elite – *ulema* (Clergies men), doctors of religion. The liberal elements are mainly consisted of the westernised elites who opposed the repressive nature of Kemalism –the stateist elites- and any kind of state interference into the economic and political life (Kongar, E 1998:131). Even today the cleavage of

Table: 3.1 How would you place the VP on the left-right scale?

WHERE DOES THE VP STAND?	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Centre-right party	14	33.33
Islamic party/ Party of believers	13	30.95
A mass party which is neither on the left nor on the right	10	23.80
Right wing party	3	7.14
Conservative right party	2	4.76
Total	42	100

Source: Fieldwork data from Ankara.

secularist (laicist) / religious-traditionalist continues to be one of the most influential variable that determines the party preferences and electoral outcomes in Turkish politics. However, from the late 1960s onwards there have been some new political issues such as emergence of class politics and ethnicity and gender added in to political equation that determines the party preferences and electoral behaviour.¹³⁴

The Virtue Party founded as the successor of the WP in 1997, by a group of close aides of the leader of the Welfare Party Nejmehin Erbakan. It has continuities and discontinuities with its predecessor the WP. Where does the VP stand on the political

¹³³ The emphases are authors.

¹³⁴ See Kalaycioglu, E 1998:3-7.

spectrum? To answer this question I have asked my informants: how would you place the VP on the left-right scale?

As mentioned above the VP is the continuation of the previous pro-Islamic parties the NOP/NSP/WP. Yet the changes that came with the VP is apparent and leaves not much space for speculation.

Table 3.2 shows that the VP has moved from religious/extremist right to centre-right position. It seems my empirical findings confirms this observation. According to one-third (33.33 percent) of my informants the VP is a centre-right party. The party leadership has taken this line and has been making every effort to move party toward centre-right. However as my finding suggests this policy of moving to the centre has not been accepted by all of the party activists. Because there is a substantial proportion of them views the VP as an Islamic party. Around one-third (30.95 percent) of my informants placed the VP on the left-right scale toward the far right end; as an Islamic party or as some of them put it "the party of believers". The third largest block which consists of around one-quarter (23.80 percent) viewed the VP as a mass party that is neither on the left nor on the right, while less than one-fifth (7.14 percent) saw it as right wing party and 4.76 percent of them saw it as a conservative right party.

The result is surprising in some sense because it seems the party split into three large blocks representing, the centre-right, religious fundamentalist or Islamist right and the third one is mass party neither on the left nor on the right. But in other sense it confirms the existing fault line between the moderates or so called 'progressivists/youngsters' that led by Tayyip Erdogan (ex-mayor of Istanbul) and the 'elders/grey-haired' traditionalists led by Erbakan (the long term leader of the NSP/WP/VP since the 1970s). The third block however seems difficult to fit in a context: for some of the respondents in this group the VP is neither on the left nor on the right. The reason for this they gave was it is un-Islamic to have divisions such as left and right. For some others the VP is a true mass party that is beyond the old left right divide. It can be argued that the majority in this group are members that joined the VP with non-religious and non-ideological reasons. However at the ideological level this third group does not seem to be unified or homogenous. Therefore other two groups can assimilate it.

In fact the VP's first Congress confirmed this fact in 15 May 2000 in where two groups of delegates from centre-right and Islamists clashed fiercely over the control of the party organizations and positions. The third group did not display any significant appearance. The final split emerged when the VP closed down in 2001. The VP split right in the middle and became two different parties: the *AK Partisi* (Justice and Development Party) under the leadership of Tayyip Erdoğan representing the centre-right ideology and the second party is called the *Saadet Partisi* (SP) (Happiness Party) representing the traditionalist line of Erbakan's Islamic ideology.

Despite the fact that the WP was charged with anti secular activities and closed down by the Supreme Court in 1998 the VP continued to enjoy widespread public support. Since then the Fazilet (Virtue) party has been under the watchful eye of the secular military and civil elite. It seems the anxiety over the rise of the political Islam in Turkey has been unfound.

As the election results have been showing throughout the 1990s the WP/VP gathered around 20 percent of the total vote in Turkey. This means the rest of the 80 percent of the Islamic population does not vote for the VP. How is this to be interpreted? The answer is rather simple. The Christian population of Germany or Holland does not only vote for the Christian Democrat Parties (CDP) either. It is true that in Turkey as in many other countries religion as one of the influential political variable has been playing an important role in terms of voting behaviour, it has got its own limitations. Equally there are other socio-political variables that influences citizen's party preferences. In fact as studies shown that not more than between one-third and one-half of WP/VP's voters- that is equivalent of around 10 percent of total vote in Turkey- came from religious reasons. The rest came from party's non-religious class appeals.¹³⁵

The full impact and consequences of this transition process that started with the closure of the WP and the VP being established in its place will be discussed later but as one would have predicted the closure of the WP had a negative effect on the election results of the new VP. The WP enjoyed 21.4 per cent of the total vote and

¹³⁵ See Özbudun E, 2000, p.88.

158 seats in parliament. It had become the largest party in parliament. However, the VP suffered a 6 percent of loss of support in the last general elections (18 April 1999) it received 15.0 percent of the vote and 105 seats in parliament.¹³⁶ Nevertheless it did rather well in the simultaneous local elections.¹³⁷

There were, though, some surprising outcomes in the last elections. Among them the swap that occurred between the NAP and VP in the district of Erzurum deserves a close examination. As many districts in the Eastern and central Anatolian regions Erzurum is a strong hold of the religious right and the extreme right. The reason for this is the existence of Alevi/Sunni divides in these regions.¹³⁸ Although both parties the WP/VP and NAP have been strong in the district of Erzurum, the WP/VP had won by obtaining more than one-third (34.34 percent) of the votes the metropolitan municipality in local election (1994). In the same election NAP obtained less than one-quarter (22.59 percent) of the vote. However this figure turned up side down, the NAP obtained one-third (33.18 percent) of votes and won, beside 19 other *il* (district) municipalities, the metropolitan municipality in Erzurum, while the VP obtained one-quarter (26.31 percent) of vote.¹³⁹

How this NAP/VP swop can be explained? There can be a few reasons for this to happen. Perhaps the most important point we should mention is that the social bases of the both parties are much closer to each other than they are to other parties on the right. This closeness could lead substantial swings in between these two parties. It has been calculated that across the country there were around 4.5 percent of the VP's voter shifted their vote to the NAP in 1999 general election (Berberoğlu E, 1999). It seems the shift from the VP to NAP in Erzurum is (8 percent) almost twice the national average. The most likely reason for this swing it seems is the process of 28 February that led to the resignation of the first Islamist led government in 1997. Just before its first year in office this government was pushed to resign by the country's powerful military. The chain of events that occurred while it was in office damaged the WP as party that in conflict with countries establishment. Although majority of its

¹³⁶ Istanbul daily Hurriyet, 20 Nisan (April), 1999.

¹³⁷ For the result of the 18 April 1999 elections see Web pages: <http://www.trt.net.tr/secim99>

¹³⁸ See Çakkır R 1994, p.221.

¹³⁹ See www.yerelnet.org.tr/seçimler/index.php; Hurriyet (Istanbul) daily, 20 April, 1999.

voters saw it as unjust repression of the WP and its cause and their loyalty has increased to their party, some of its supporters disillusioned with the party and leadership. They criticized Necmettin Erbakan for his uncompromising, confrontational style and switched their support to the NAP in 1999. Giving the fact those WP/VP's voters in Erzurum, unlike voters in gecekondus of big cities, are more likely to support the party for religious and ideological reasons. And, also, compare to any other right wing parties the NAP and WP/VP have much in common ground and share similar national and religious values. For these reasons such shifts between two parties are more likely to happen.

It can also be argued that local elections have their own dynamics. I am not arguing they are independent of the general socio-economic and political conditions in a country but local politics is more likely to be influenced by the local issues. I have observed during my fieldwork in Ankara that at the local level the politicians can be rather pragmatic and look for possibility of alliance and tactical voting. Also the personality of candidates at the local politics can be very influential on the electoral outcome.

3.4.1 The Aims of the Party

In its party constitution the main principles and goals are declared as: "... bring peace, freedom, justice, and respect for the nation. To this end we act with respect to the charter of the universal human rights and basic human rights."¹⁴⁰ In his opening speech of the meeting "*ilk Adim* (First Step) Kutan, 1998a explained his party's five main views and aims: 1) Democracy, 2) Human rights, 3) Freedom, 4) Rule of law, 5) Development and contemporariness. When we have acquired these five points, there will be: Peace and safety, Freedom, Justice, Welfare and prosperity and respectability" (Kutan, R 1998a, p.3).

The party was founded in an atmosphere of political turmoil. With the 28 February 1997 process, the military was determined to punish the WP. Under these conditions the VP had to be extremely cautious not to attract the military's or the court's attention. So its program, codes, ideology and rhetoric had to be very carefully

¹⁴⁰ (1998: 1) Fazilet Partisi TÜZÜK, (Virtue Party Book of Code of Practices) Ankara

orchestrated. Compared to the WP's programme, the VP's program is full of compromise, assurances, pleas for cohesion, unity, democracy, respect for the rule of law and the principle of secularism to appease the authorities.

'Today is the first year of the VP's establishment. Our party was established by our 33 friends on 17 December 1997, has established its organisations in 80 districts, all sub-districts and villages. With its 144 MPs it has become the opposition party of Turkey. As the VP we are the party of compromise and dialogue. These are not the needs of our party but of the country' (Kutan, 1998b, pp.3-5). In its program the VP gave priority to politics and the State. In this section the present condition of Turkish politics and problems of central governance are criticised. It argues that politicians have lost their credibility, meaning the people will shy away from politics (ibid, p. 6). In this rapidly changing world, Turkey has increasingly faced internal and external changes in economic, social, political, scientific and cultural systems (Ibid, p. 7).

Our understanding of politics and government is not to oppress or ignore the demands for change, but to transform these demands and criticisms into peace and development. It is the indispensable part of our policy and government to elevate these demands to the level of political representation to transform them into the most important ingredient of democratic government and economic development (ibid, p. 7). Later on it argues that it is the main charter of the VP to unify all different political, ideological and different life styles of the citizens under the will of living together. (Ibid, p. 7) [My translations].

It seems that the VP presents very liberal policies, compromising far more than the WP. It has been suggested that following the postmodern coup of 28 February 1997 political Islam has been seeking new ways and avenues to survive.¹⁴¹ One of the most commonly discussed strategies for change was the VP's move from the far religious right to the centre-right. It has been a necessity for the cadres of the old WP and new VP to move towards the centre.

¹⁴¹ See Donat, Y (1998) "*Fazilet 'te "orta yol" arayışı*" (The VP searches for "middle way" (Sabah 11 July 1998,)

Perhaps the clearest sign of the change in strategy change was the transfer of 'Nationalist-Conservatives' or in some cases 'liberal' figures such as Prof. Nevzat Yalçıntaş, Ali Coşkun, Abdülkadir Aksu, Cemil Çiçek and Nazlı Ilıcak. All of them are well-known, significant political figures in Turkey. This transfer made it clear that the VP had no interest in reviving the WP but in effect, had departed from the traditional NOP/NSP/WP line altogether.¹⁴² As one would expect there have been reactions against all these changes in strategy. Some traditionalist, conservative elements tried to limit the changes but the newcomers knew what was waiting for them and after negotiating with Erbakan they secured their places.

The WP/VP has a very pragmatist tradition,¹⁴³ making the Islamic movement in Turkey very different from Islamic movements. It never had an agenda of Islamic revolution like Iran or Algeria, but instead took a parliamentary, electoral path to increase its space and influence in society.

3.4.2 The Major Policies: Change and Continuity

In the VP's election manifesto secularisation is described as 'one's freedom to choose whatever belief one wants. "It means the state is a referee not a player". It cannot be seen as a means of pushing aside any sort of religious expression in society and it cannot deny religious and moral freedoms. Otherwise this institution of solution will itself become a problem. Religion is not something that you could remove from inside the people and throw away. The diversity that occurs from religious differences must be accepted as cultural richness. In the past our nation has always encouraged this richness and shown great tolerance to it. On the issue of secularism the VP upholds human rights."¹⁴⁴

From the above sentences we see that their attitude towards secularisation became more positive. The NOP/NSP saw secularism as the oppression of religion and the oppression of believers by atheists. The VP does not hold the traditional National View anymore. The VP does however imply that there are complaints and grievances.

¹⁴² Özgürel, 1998 "*Fazilet Partisi nde rota Değişikliği*" (The Chang Of Direction in the VP), Istanbul daily Radikal, 23 Eylül 1998 (23 September 1998) .

¹⁴³ Özbudun, E 2000.

¹⁴⁴ See Günışığında Türkiye, (1999:38-39).

The VP's leadership rightly complains that the concept of secularisation has been politicised and it needs to be redefined according to its original meaning. Kutan argued that: "We have to define secularisation according to the democratic characters of these societies from where the concept came." (1998a: 23). "In Turkey secularisation has been politicised. In other words, it is not secularisation that we have in Turkey it is secularism. We are refusing politicised secularisation because it degenerates the core of democratic secularisation." He continued: "Turkey has to make her choice not for the authoritarian -Jacobean secularisation but democratic secularisation"(Ibid, p. 23). It can safely be claimed that for the first time the VP guided the issue of secularisation into the right direction. The traditional National View point of secularisation was rather dry and unsophisticated. It was not so much debated as a concept but rather rejected with a blunt refusal or criticism.

It appears that this time secularisation has been become a semi-philosophical issue rather than a purely political one and debated with care, not bluntly rejected. By this I am not intending to say that it is not a political issue, but rather the way that in which the VP brought it into the public debate indicates a new approach. This must be the overall effect of their new programme concentrated around democracy, human rights, freedom, rule of law and development.

It can be argued that the VP made one of the most dramatic changes in the traditional National View's so called Just Economic Order (JEO). The Just Economic Order confused many people for good reasons. It offered JEO, policies that attracted the lower middle and lower classes but it was, in reality, the free market economy with added superfluous words. The VP rightly abandoned it and declared themselves defenders of the free market economy, fast track privatisation, maintaining all ties with foreign banking and financial institutions and so on. Its basic economic policies are summarised as:

- The economy must be in accordance with the free market economy, private ownership and private entrepreneurship.
- An economic strategy that is open, highly competitive and sustainable must be developed. (1998b, p.56).
- The state must be withdrawn from the economy to undertake its primary duties.

-Development of healthy relationships with the IMF and the World Bank (1998b, pp. 36-37). With this new era the VP dropped its opposition towards Turkey's integration in world economy. Thus the VP needed to distance itself from the *Adil Düzen* project. A. Çoşkun, the VP's deputy chairman responsible for economic issues, pointed out that the program of the Just Order was an empty concept unsuitable to addressing Turkey's problems. For that reason there is no trace of it in the VP's program.¹⁴⁵

As discussed in chapter 4 since the 1980s Turkish economy has been witnessed major economic crisis, long term high inflation, high unemployment rate, and high rate of internal and external debt, extensive budget deficits and like. Since then the neoliberal economy policies have led a major restructuring process that has not been yielded any benefit for millions of people across the country. On the contrary it caused a significant drop in the real earnings of salary and wage earners. The impacts of the neoliberal policies on the agricultural sector has been far more worse and triggered what I called 'the second phase of rapid urbanization' started from early 1980s.

The WP's just order and its importance can only be appreciated against this background. First of all the *Adil Düzen* (just order) offered an alternative to neoliberal structuring policies that has been hurting the working classes. It offered a kind of 'third way' solutions to the problems and ills of neoliberalism. The *Adil Düzen*, in fact, it was not just limited to the economy policies of the WP but it was promising just social order, just political, legal and moral order. It was promising almost a regime change based on sort of a religiously inspired queasy egalitarianism. Throughout the 1990s party's main slogan was *Adil Düzen gelecek zulüm bitecek* (Just order will prevail, oppression/unjust will perish). Although the project of "just order" was not coherently developed, nor was it well articulated to avert potential critics, it did attract massive attention from lower middle and lower classes across the country. Studies have shown that just order did indeed contribute to the electoral success of the WP in the local (1994) and general (1995) elections. A 1996 survey found out that around 13.4 percent of the voters who voted for the WP did so because of the WP's promise of "just order".¹⁴⁶ As it is the case VP's abandonment of the policy of just order would inevitably alienate those voters who in the first place voted for WP for its

¹⁴⁵ Çakır, 1998a.

¹⁴⁶ See Özbudun, E 2000, p. 90.

promise of just order. Up to now the VP does not seem to come up with an alternative economic policy to compensate its loss by ditching the just order. As it stands now the VP might not be able to appeal to the urban poor as it did in the 1990s. However, the economic issues are not the only issues that elections are fought for. As argued in chapter 2 Turkish political party system has been declining, the political stalemate has not been overcome. Besides the economic issues there are many other issues such as widespread corruption, ethnic and religious issues where the VP can have a chance to increase its votes. Keep in mind that compared to the other mainstream parties the VP is a mass party with a vibrant, very well organised grassroots organisations and this fact will always have an impact on its electoral performance.

In terms of membership the Virtue Party has worked very hard to acquire new members. The WP had over four million members and the VP aims to reach at least that figure. But according to Kutan the VP has 310,000 members (May 10, 1998).¹⁴⁷ Unfortunately since then the VP has not updated and declared its membership figures.

Table: 3.2 When Did You Become Member?

Years		Parties from 1970-1999	Frequency of Occurrence	% (Per cent)	Cumulative
0 - 2	1999-97	The Fazilet (Virtue) Party	6	14.63	14.63
3 - 7	1996-92	The Refah (Welfare) Party	7	17.07	58.53
8 - 12	1991-87		10	24.39	
13 - 17	1986-83		7	17.07	
19 - 23	1980-77	The NOP	0	0	26.82
24 - +	1976-70	/NSP	11	26.82	
Total			41		100

Source: Fieldwork data from Ankara.

I can make a prediction on the basis of the information given by administrators of both party branches before the elections of 18 April 1999. They individually registered one third of the members that they had in the WP. So a rough estimate can put the membership at around one and half million. Of course it is not an exact prediction.

¹⁴⁷ See Recai Kutan (1998a, p.2).

When I asked when members joined the VP, I found that the majority (85 percent) of them were members of a very young party (the VP was founded in 1997) for a very long time. As table 3.1 shown more than a quarter (27 percent) declared they had been members for at least 19 years or more –indicating the NSP period-, while 59 percent of them has been members for a period of 3 to 17 years – indicating the WP period- and only 15 percent joined the VP since 1997.

The most striking departure from its traditional line came with its policies on external relations. The VP dropped almost every objection that the national view maintained since the early 1970s. After assessing the new world order and the process of globalisation the VP lays down its basic principles on foreign policies as:

- Our first priority is to develop good relations in our region with our neighbours. Without having good relationships no country could prosper.
- Among our priorities is to increase the economic, cultural and political relations with our neighbours, and develop regional integration.
- Due to its history and geographic positions Turkey cannot stay away from Europe. In this respect the customs union needs to be rearranged in line with our political interests.
- We believe Turkey's role within the NATO should continue.
- We support the full membership of Turkey into the EU.
- Our long-term friendship with the USA will continue. In addition to its Atlantic and European dimension, Turkey should develop her relations in North Africa, South Asia, East Asia, the Balkans and the Caucasus. To this end any kind of relationship with the Central Asian republics will be developed (1998b: 43-47).

3.5 Conclusions

Although, the Islamist party was not a newcomer to Turkish politics, the electoral successes of Refah triggered a flood of suspicion and paranoia among Turkey's secularist elites. Refah's narrow victory with 21.3 percent of the vote and 158 seats out of 550 in parliament created shock waves not just at home but also abroad. (Sayari, 1996, p.35). *Irtica fobisi* (phobia of Islamic fundamentalism) dominated the daily reports. Some newspapers urged an immediate action against the *şeriaatçı*

yükseliş (rise of fundamentalism); others urged the military to intervene to restore the principles of secularism.

On the other hand, it is hardly surprising to see that the WP made big election gains from 1991 onwards. The bulk of its supporters and votes come from the lower and lower middle classes urbanites; new migrants in the *gecekondus* (shantytowns) who had escaped from rural poverty but found another in the cities, wage and salary earners who lost half of the real wages, *petit bourgeoisie*; shopkeepers, artisans and small merchants were all increasingly threatened by the advance of big business.

The religious dimension of the WP/VP has been the focal point in Turkish political discourse. Are they fundamentalists? Is there a threat of Islamic revolution in Turkey or have they got a plan for bringing Shariat to Turkey? Are they democrats or fundamentalists? Are they doing *takkiye* (deceit; deceiving us)? When faced with a similar question the leader of the VP, Kutan replied: "I swear not we are not cheating, we genuinely believe in a secularist republic, peace and coexistence of all citizens, democracy and human rights".¹⁴⁸ However at the grassroots level my empirical findings showed that three in five joined the VP for Islamic or ideological reasons. This means they are more radical than ordinary members and voters. For this group Mawdudi's 'theo-democracy'¹⁴⁹ could be more desirable. They want the republic to take an Islamic tone rather than an authoritarian secular but even this issue would not be discussed explicitly in public.

The role they see for religion is however not easily understood. Although they do not want to see a sharp separation of state and religion, they do understand that in contemporary Turkey it is impossible to introduce Islamic laws: sharia. Some of them totally oppose this separation and insist that without religion the state and society will

¹⁴⁸ Donat, Y Istanbul daily Sabah, 11 July 1998.

¹⁴⁹ For the concept of 'theo-democracy' see Esposito and Voll, (1996, p.24).

Table 3.3 Comparing Turkish Islamist Parties, From 1970 to 2001.

Party	The NOP/NSP	The Welfare Party	The Virtue Party
Party Characteristic	-Cadre Party. -Anti system	From cadre to Mass party Anti system rhetoric dominant	Mass Party
Membership	Restricted. Members must be good Muslims. Prayers practised commonly. No alcohol, no smoking.	Open, not so stringent. Being good Muslim preferred but not essential. - gave the identity of WP to memb.	Open to everyone. No specific requirements. Religious aspects trimmed off. Smoking is allowed in party buildings.
Support Base	From traditional, religious segments -small towns and rural areas.	Much broader support bases. Shift from rural to urban. Lower middle and lower classes. Gecekondü poor	Same as the WP's support base.
Attitudes of Secularisation	Dictatorship of unbelievers over Believers. It is damaging social structure.	-Not enemy of religion but... -The concept will be changed -Obstacle to democracy	As the freedom of belief but Anglo-Saxon version preferred.
Economy Policies	State run. Usury prohibited. High priority to economic modernisation and industrialisation.	Adil Düzzen (Just Society). _ Social democratic rhetoric. Decreased state role. Islamic banking.	No more Adil Düzzen (Just Society). Free Market Economy.
Foreign Policies	West is condemned. EEC Imperialism and Zionist plot. Turkish identity will be eroded. EEC is Catholic unity	Anti Zionist, anti Western and USA. Islamic UN, Islamic NATO, Islamic EEC, and UNESCO.	A total shift. Good relations with the West essential. Membership of EU is the goal. NATO is essential.
Style of Propaganda	Tebliğ (religious invitation), traditional religious ties used.	Grassroots Activism. Well organised Party organisation, militant membership. Active membership recruitment. Door-to-door canvassing	Nation wide party organisation and effective grassroots activism.
Woman Inv./Cand/MPs	None exists	From 1990 active women inv. Ladies Commission. No Candidate...	First Women MPs (3), Very active Ladies commission.

diminish, but the majority stated clearly that they wanted the principle of *laiklik* (secularisation) redefined as it is in Western democracies. For them this meant to have religion and the state totally independent from each other. What most see right now is that religion is not free from the interference of the state. On thing is certain that the Islamist movement is not static, as it has been wrongly perceived so. Like anything around us it too has been changing with the time.

It can be argued that majority of the reporters and commentators in the media, as well as many writers and academic has been making a major mistake in their approach to the Islamist movements. They see them as static relics of the past not as a product of present times. For many since they are religious or Islamic fundamentalist movements they never change, as if they existed in an ivory tower. But this is not the case. As table 3.2 illustrated since the 1970s the Turkish Islamist movement has change beyond recognition. As depicted in table 3.2 that last three decades pro-Islamic party has changed from an anti-system cadre party (NOP/NSP) to a mass system party (the VP). From its membership policies to support base, attitudes of secularism to economy policies, form foreign policies to women policies the change has been prevalent in many areas.

Change of Mind or Change of Tactic?

Although the rise of the WP/VP has overwhelmingly been viewed as the rise of Islamic fundamentalism, neither its leading cadres nor the majority of its voters seem to be religious extremists or fundamentalists. Unlike in many Islamic movements in the Muslim world the Turkish Islamic party leader Erbakan and his close associates are not clergymen but have professional or business backgrounds (Heper, 1997, p. 35). Erbakan himself is a professor of engineering who graduated from a German university. Furthermore, in contrast to other Islamic movements the tradition of NOP-

NSP-WP/VP has not been able to produce original Islamic thinkers like Jamal al Din al -Afghani, Mawdudi, Ali Shariati, or Ayatollah Khomeini. Erbakan is not an Islamic thinker.¹⁵⁰

If we return to the beginning of this chapter the changes in a party system or a political party are reflections of the realities of global changes.¹⁵¹ In this manner it can be argued that political Islam in Turkey has been constantly evolving. This is a direct consequence of the modernization and secularisation process that has occurred since the 1920s in Turkey.

Another important dimension to party change has been the use of force by the state toward the anti system parties in Turkey. The NOP/NSP and the WP were anti system parties. For that reason they were constantly scrutinised and interfered with. As the Turkish constitution forbids the reestablishment of a party closed down by the court the parties had to be different. Nor could they simply be superficially different. They had to avoid contentious issues and gravitate toward the centre. I am not suggesting that this is purely on the basis of force as it involves rewards as well as sanctions. As well as being forced to moderate their ideologies, rhetoric etc., the WP/VP has displayed more pragmatist characteristics than other fundamentalist groups. This pragmatic approach is leading the Islamists to change.

¹⁵⁰ Çakır, 1994, pp. 126-127.

¹⁵¹ Maor, 1997, p.52.

CHAPTER FOUR

URBAN ROOTS OF POLITICAL ISLAM

The destiny of Turkey's political system is determined by three metropolitan cities; Istanbul, Ankara and İzmir because the majority of MPs elected by the three. Yet, the power balance in terms of voting is determined by the urban poor of the *gecekondus* (slums)."¹⁵²

4.1 Introduction

Although rapid urbanization has started from the 1950s, due to the restructuring policies it gained another momentum from the early 1980s. Between 1980 and 1997 the balance of the population changed from rural to urban: those who lived in the cities increased from 43 % in 1980 to 65% in 1997. This fact has played a crucial role in the ascent to power of political Islam in 1996.

For years the Islamic movements were thought to be traditionalist, anti-modernist rural based phenomena. On the contrary, I argue that those movements are modern in their understanding of the world, and organisational structure. They emerged as a result of modernisation and rapid urbanisation in many Muslim countries. Political Islam in Turkey shares many characteristics these movements.

In this chapter I examine the relationships between the process of rapid urbanisation, political participation and the rise of the WP/VP. In the first half of this chapter I discuss the nature of Islamic movements, their urban characteristics and urbanisation and its effects on political participation. Especially in this context I focus on the political implications of rapid urbanisation such as the relationship between urbanisation and political participation. I discuss whether or not the process of urbanisation in Turkey has facilitated a greater degree of political participation or not

¹⁵² See *Milliyet*, 22 January 1999.

and, how the WP/VP has responded to this process. Local politics are also affected by rapid urbanisation. In this study I look at the ways in which urban local politics has changed and its impacts on the rise of political Islam.

Rapid urbanisation has become one of the most common characteristics of developing countries. Today they consist of large urban populations. However, the pattern of urbanisation has been very different compared to that in developed countries. What are the causes and the implications of over-urbanisation?

I will look at various reasons why urbanisation broadens the social bases of political participation. Specifically in the Turkish context I focus on the characteristics of urbanisation and its implications for the political process.

As mentioned earlier the neoliberal economic policies that were implemented from the early 1980s led to a second phase of rapid urbanization overshadowing the first phase which was started from the 1950s. The second phase that occurred from the 1980s led by a large- scale migration from villages and towns to the major city centres. One of the prime objectives of this chapter is to investigate whether the rapid migration from rural to urban centres has any impact on voting patterns. More precisely to see whether the second phase of rapid urbanisation, which started from the early 1980s has strengthened the religious right in the middle of the 1990s. It has been suggested that the massive migration in the 1980s, led by neoliberal restructuring programmes of the 1980s had a strong effect on the rise of the WP in the 1990s.

4.2 Urban Politics

4.2.1 Cities as the Social Bases of Political Islam

The last quarter of the twentieth century witnessed a rapid and unprecedented revival of religious movements of every faith around the World. Among these movements

political Islam has been the most frequently discussed. The reason for this is due to its extent and potential implications for many regimes in the Middle East, and other Muslim countries like the newly emerged Turkic-Muslim countries of the former Soviet Union, Indonesia, Pakistan, and Turkey as well as its external consequences. Islamic parties and movements have been given a special place but very often they are viewed as fundamentalist, anti-western or anti-modern.

As Oliver Roy (1994: 1) puts it

Many in the West seem to view the end of our century as the era of the "Islamic threat." The irruption of Islam into the political landscape is often perceived as an anachronism; how is it possible, late in the twentieth century, to return to the Middle Ages? We envision bearded mullahs everywhere, surging forth from mosques and villages to attack the modern-day Babylons, seeking to create a reactionary, irrational, and violent world.

As Roy points out many commentators in the Western media as well as academics of various disciplines tend to equate these movements with "extremism", and "terrorism". They are often perceived as "irrational", "intolerant" and "fanatics" who want to turn the clock back to 700 AD". For some they are the "Green Menace" echoing the "Red Menace" of the former Soviet threat.¹⁵³ It seems from the analysis and comments of these influential writer's, that the vision of Islamic movements or militant Islam, as a threat to the West has gripped the imagination of Western governments and the media (Esposito, J 1995, p. 3).

Another commonly shared view among Western intellectuals, governments and media is that Islamic movements are an atavism, a rejection of modernity and the Western way of living (See Seyyed Vali, 1995, pp. 121-139). They are often viewed as "fossilised relics, insulated from and oblivious to their surroundings, living perpetually in a bygone age" (Caplan, 1987, p. 5). They also are considered intellectually limited and alienated from the rest of the contemporary world (See

¹⁵³ See, for example, Huntington, "The Clash of Civilisations?", *Foreign Affairs*, Summer Issue, 1994: 22-49; Levis, B "The Roots of Muslim Rage" *Atlantic Monthly*, September, 1990: 47-60; Miller, J "The Challenge of Radical Islam", *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 72, No.2, pp.43-56.1993: 43-56; Munson, H "Not all Crustaceans are Crabs: Reflections on the Comparative Study of Fundamentalism and Politics", *Contention*, Vol. 4, No. 3, Spring, 1995: 151-166.

Walker, 1987, p. 197). Liberal commentators like Hadar (1993, pp. 27-42) views these movements as a reaction to the 'confusion and anxiety' of modernity, as well as a revolt against failed Western style political and economic orders in the Middle East. The liberals' point of view differs from the rest because they do not directly suggest that Islamic fundamentalist movements are against modernity but they say they are reacting against the 'confusion and anxiety' brought by the process of rapid modernization and uneven development.

It can be argued that the majority of approaches are narrow in their focus on the ideology of the Islamic movements as a simple, 'literal reading' of the 'secret text', the Koran and its desire to turn to the past and are a distorted image of these movements. They ignore the sociological reasons behind the rise of Islamic movements altogether. As I argued in chapter 1, from pre 1979 Iran to Algeria, in many Muslim countries political Islam emerged as a reaction against modernising, secular, oppressive and failed states that failed to solve socio-economic problems and corruption. The contemporary problems such as mass urbanisation, unemployment, former or existing foreign domination are the overriding cause of their growth rather than merely religious reasons. (See Halliday, 1995a, p.48). Contrary to the dominant view Islamic movements and parties have successfully adopted their ideologies and organisational structures to the contemporary world.

The emergence and subsequent rise of Islamic movements have been closely connected with the major socio-economic changes that occurred in Muslim countries. As Esposito (1995) points out the modernization and Westernisation process that many Muslim countries undertook after their independence was primarily understood as a substantial degree of urbanisation. As the modern governments, private companies and foreign investors focused on urban areas there started a process of rapid urbanisation triggering massive migration from rural to urban centres. However due to the realities of poverty in urban slums and shantytowns the hopes of the majority of the new migrants for a better life did not often materialise. (Ibid, p. 16).

In addition to unrealised expectations, loss of small community ties and traditional values, the newcomers to the cities were shocked by modern urban life and its

Westernised culture and mores. Therefore many of them felt alienated and marginalized, and found an anchor in religion. For them Islam offered a sense of identity, fraternity, and cultural values that helped the urban poor to overcome the fears of their new environment. It is obvious that in many Muslim countries the urban poor and the lower middle class found a welcome sense of meaning and security in a religious revivalism. (Esposito, 1995, p. 16). There are individual case studies that support this observation. In many Muslim countries, notably Algeria, Egypt, Iran, Lebanon, Pakistan, Syria, Sudan and Turkey, where Islamic movements have a strong presence, the similar socio-economic problems like rapid urbanisation, rampant poverty, unemployment, housing shortages, lack of basic services, etc., have been prevalent. For example Iran, prior to the revolution, had undergone a massive socio-economic transformation accompanied by rapid urbanisation and uneven economic development. In fact this was the real cause of the collapse of the Iranian monarchy. In his analysis of the Iranian revolution F. Halliday points out a process of rapid and uneven economic development throughout the 1960s and 70s, which caused great inequalities and social tension in the cities. The advancement of modern capitalism caused a significant threat to the bazaar merchants, created a widespread injustice and social tension that unified and mobilised bazaar merchants, the Iranian clergy and the urban poor to overthrow the Shah's regime in 1979 (see Halliday, 1995a, pp. 48-53).¹⁵⁴ Similarly Walton, J and Seddon, D (1994: 174) observed a strong involvement of Islamic movements in many of urban popular protest during the 1980s.

“From 1979 onwards, after the Iranian revolution the relationship between popular urban protest and the dramatic rise of Islamism, with its explicit objective of overthrowing “illegitimate” regimes, became a matter of major concern to many governments, while commentators persistently drew attention to the revolutionary appeal of Islamism and to the increasing strength of the Islamic movements, particularly among the urban and disadvantaged in a period of rapid and traumatic economic and social change.”

Halliday (1995a, p.72) suggested that: although the Iranian revolution seemed to be a reaction against the modernisation process it had a ‘unique combination of modern and traditional in its institutional and ideological features’ Its modernity is the product of rapid urbanization, industrialization, and the demographic and social tensions created by the social transformation of the 1960s and 1970s. (Ibid, p. 72). For him the

¹⁵⁴ See also Keddie, 1981, pp. 239-249.

Iranian revolution was only partially a religious revolution, being more of a great modern urban movement that was created by the process of social transformation (ibid, p. 72). In a similar vein Roy (1994) argued that these movements are the product of the modern world. They involve young militants educated in modern schools raised in recently urbanised families some from the impoverished middle class and contrast to common belief, are rarely mullahs. They borrowed Marxist terminology and tactics. Also the masses who support and follow these Islamic movements are not "traditional" or "traditionalist" either. They, by and large, live with the values of the modern city where they have adopted the current trend of consumerism (1994, pp. 3-4). For a long time –mistakenly- many commentators believed that Islamist movements would only flourish in societies where modernity and urbanisation had failed to materialise. By assuming that Islamist movements are anti-modernist, irrational and archaic phenomenon these commentators mostly failed to see their true characteristics. It is extremely important to emphasise that Islamist movements are not traditionalist rural small town organisations or a prehistoric phenomenon.

It has been observed that political Islam has followed a similar route in Turkey. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s Turkey underwent a massive socio-economic transformation that led to further polarization of Turkish society. The sixties were the beginning of a process of transformation from commercial to industrial capitalism (Ahmed, 1993, p, 376). This transformation increased the tension between the Anatolian petit bourgeois (the artisans, town merchants, small tradesmen, and shopkeepers) and the upper classes of Istanbul. ¹⁵⁵

The Anatolian petit bourgeoisie organised and rather cunningly utilised Islam's political potential to mobilise some sections of the electorate in rural and urban areas. The first pro-Islamic party, the NOP (later known as the NSP), was founded in 1970. It was rather popular in the poorest regions and districts in the 1970s. ¹⁵⁶ But later in the 1970s as result of rapid urbanisation a new political cleavage emerged in the

¹⁵⁵ For further elaboration see Chapter 3.

¹⁵⁶ See Saribay, 1985, p. 144

cities. The NSP became popular in the big cities as well as well as in the less developed regions.¹⁵⁷

In the 1970s the social bases of the NOP/NSP consisted of the self-employed: artisans, town merchants, small shopkeepers and tradesmen those religious entrepreneurs, who had graduated from modern secular schools of the republic and the urban poor who had been displaced and disappointed with their urban experiences in the urban areas.¹⁵⁸ In the rural areas, however, its social bases were different with support from traditional, religious strata in the less developed semi feudal regions.

From the mid 1980s the demographic composition of the country began to change. Due to the neoliberal restructuring policies a very rapid urbanisation process took place and by the early 1990s the population balance had shifted from rural to urban centres. Currently 65 percent of the population live in cities.¹⁵⁹ In the 1990s the WP (the successor of the NSP) became a predominantly urban-based mass party. Its electoral support base broadened among the urban population drastically.¹⁶⁰

Mainly the gecekondu areas that encircle the main metropolitan cities have supported the WP/VP. Their supporters are the migrant workers who are disillusioned by the unwelcoming environment of the cities with their harsh living and working conditions, unemployment, poverty, lack of housing and basic services. They are wage and salary earners whose income dropped 50 percent between 1980 and 1990, due to high inflation and the devaluation of the Turkish Lira. The lower middle classes: artisans, traditional merchants, small shopkeepers and tradesmen whose existence was further threatened by the neoliberal restructuring policies, and finally the Kurds who are in search of their own identity and cultural rights. The WP/VP's non-nationalistic, Islamic approach towards ethnic groups appeals to some sections of the Kurdish population.¹⁶¹ The popularity of the WP/VP lay behind its inclusive,

¹⁵⁷ See Özbudun, 1973 cited in Sarıbay, 1985, pp. 143-144.

¹⁵⁸ See Çakır, 1994, p. 21.

¹⁵⁹ See Table: 4.1.

¹⁶⁰ See chapter 3. In a recent interview, the leader of the VP Recai Kutan, also said that the majority of their voters and supporters lives in towns and urban centres. See Recai Kutan's interview by Melih Birsal, *Gündemdekiler*, NTV, 28 October 1999.

¹⁶¹ See Ayata, 1993, pp. 51-67; Kalaycıoğlu, 1996, pp. 403-424; Ögütçü, 1994, p. 826; Özbudun, 2000, pp. 87-91; Sarıbay, 1985, p. 45.

broad ranging religious and nonreligious appeal. It emphasises the religious values, it respects the national and moral values as well as it emphasis industrialization, social justice and an honest government. (Özbudun, 2000, p. 91).

As argued, the WP/VP is an urban-based political party. Analysis of election results indicates that, since the early 1990s, the social bases of the Refah (Welfare) -Fazilet (Virtue) party has shifted to the cities. (Çakır, 1994, p.223). It is a new development for Turkish Politics because, traditionally the NSP had its support in rural villages and towns in the 1970s, however, with rapid urbanisation its support base has changed from rural to urban centres. This was especially evident with the unprecedented election results in the local elections of 1994 when the pro-Islamist WP received the majority of its votes from urban centres rather than its traditional supporters in the rural areas (ibid. 223). According to the latest surveys this trend continued in the general elections of 1995

In general terms Third World countries have faced multiple problems of underdevelopment: poverty, unemployment, rapid population growth, low life expectancy, rapid urbanisation, lack of housing and basic services, very little education and health services and above all political instability and undemocratic governments. The majority of the Muslim countries share many of these problems as well. ¹⁶² Therefore any attempt to understand the emergence and development of Islamic movements must take these conditions into consideration.

4.2.2 A Dramatic Population Shift: The Causes of Rapid Migration

The speed and scale of urbanisation that took place between 1950 and 1980 puts Turkey in the ranks of the fastest urbanising countries in the world.¹⁶³ By 1950 only 25 percent of the population lived in the cities compared to the 75 percent lived in the rural areas. However at the end of the twentieth century 65 percent (40 million people) of the population lived in urban centres.

¹⁶² Kepel, 1994, pp. 13-46.

¹⁶³ For detail see Danielson, and Keles, 1985, p. 26. Also for the urban and rural population and their ration to total population see table 4.2.

When Mustafa Kemal took the power in 1923 his prime task was creation of a modern and secular nation state. In order to achieve his goal M. Kemal must have come the same conclusion as Luicie W. Pye (1963) did. Pey (quoted in Danielson and Keleş, 1985:3) argued, " Any systematic effort to transform traditional societies in to modern societies must envisage the development of cities and modern urban societies." Since then the policy of rapid urbanisation has been persuade as a means of transforming a

Table: 4.1 Urban and Rural Population: From 1927 to 1997

CENSUS YEARS	TOTAL POPULATION	URBAN POPULATION	% URBAN	RURAL POPULATION	% RURAL
1927	13,648,000	3,305,876	24.2	10,342,391	75.78
1935	16,158,018	3,802,642	23.53	12,355,376	76.47
1940	17,820,950	4,346,249	24.39	13,474,701	75.61
1950	20,947,188	5,244,337	25.04	15,702,851	74.96
1960	27,754,820	8,859,731	31.92	18,895,089	68.08
1970	35,605,176	13,691,101	38.45	21,914,075	61.55
1980	44,736,957	19,645,007	43.91	25,091,950	56.09
1990	56,473,035	33,326,351	59.01	23,146,684	40.99
1997*	62,865,574	40,882,357	65.03	22,179,676	34.97

Source: 1990 Census of Population, State Institute of Statistics, Printing Division, Ankara, October 1993, pp.8-9.

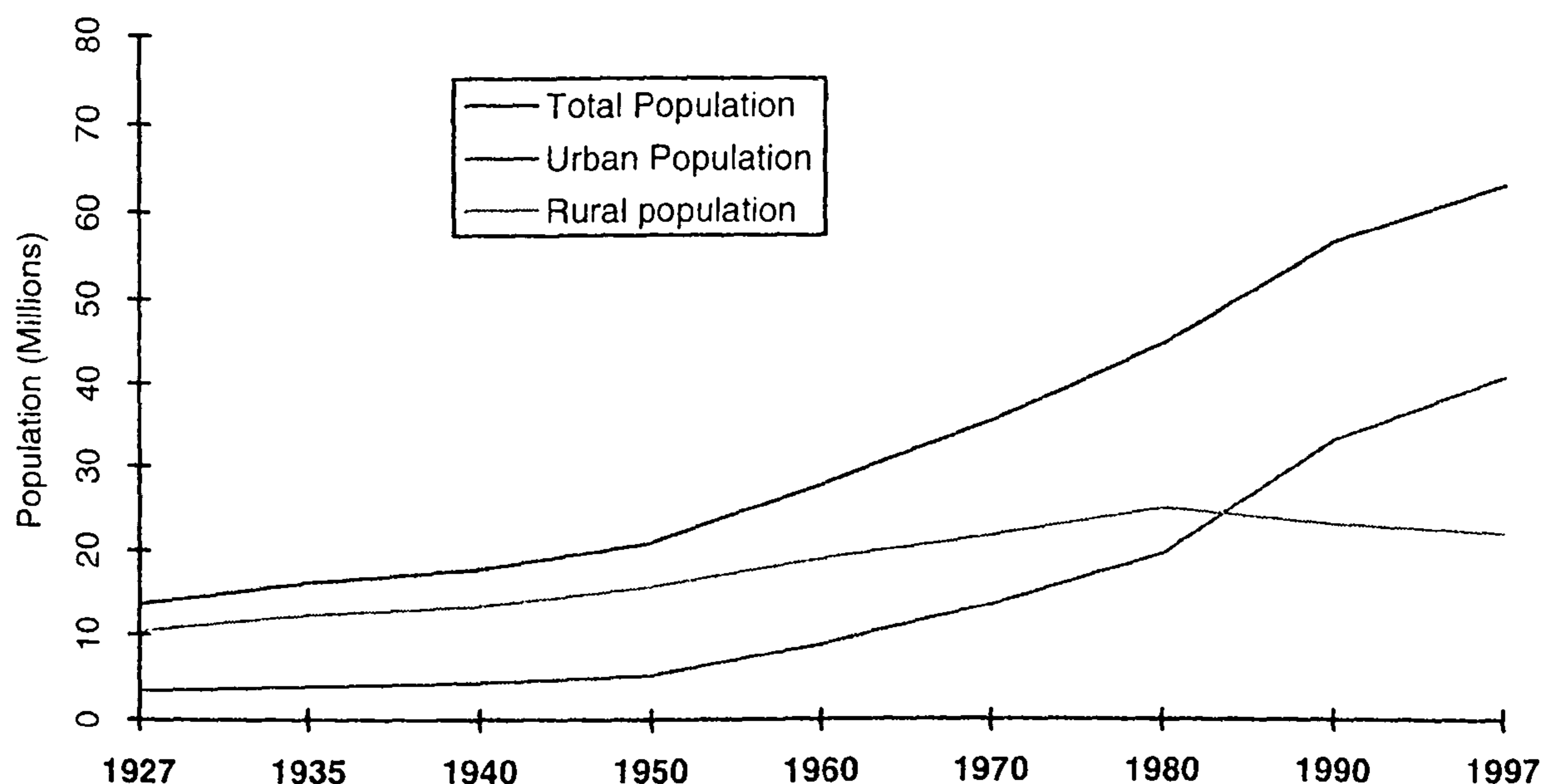
* Data for 1997 taken from the State Statistical Institute's web pages: <http://www.dic.gov.tr/TURKIS/SONIST/NUFUS/ankara.gif>.

backward, "uncivilised" traditional society. Despite the policy of rapid urbanisation the growth of city centres in between 1927 and 1950 were far from fulfilling the goal. Apart from Ankara's impressive transformation from a small dusty Anatolian town in to a city with it's over 300. 000 population by 1950, urbanisation in general was slow. As table 4.1 shows by 1950, only one forth (25.04 percent) of population lived in the cities. The majority of population 74.96 % lived in the rural areas.

As shown above table (4.1) that during the last fifty years the population balance has changed drastically in favour of cities. Between 1950 and 1990 the annual rate of population growth was 24.45 per thousand. The urban growth rate was almost twice It

can be argued that majority of the reporters and commentators in the media, as well as many writers and academic has been making a major mistake in their approach to the Islamist movements. They see them as static relics of the past not as a product of

Figure: 4.1 Change in the Urban and Rural Population, 1927-1997



Source: Data drawn from table 4.1

(43.94 per thousand) this figure for the same period. Reflecting this increase in urban population growth rate has been declining in rural areas since the 1950s. In 1960 Turkey's population reached to 27,7 million where one third (32 %) of lived in the cities and two third (68 %) lived in the rural areas. In 1970 population reached to 35,6 million where 38 percent of it lived in the urban and 62 % lived in the rural areas. In 1980 the population reached 44,7 million 44 percent of which lived in the urban and 56 per cent lived in the rural areas. By the 1990 the population increased to 56,4 million and two third (59 %) of lived in the urban and one third (41 %) of it lived in the rural areas. In 1997 population has increased to 62,8 million by now 65 per cent of it lived in the urban areas while 35 per cent lived in the rural areas.

Between 1985 and 1990 Turkey's population was increased 21.71 per thousand per year.¹⁶⁴ Furthermore between 1980 and 1990 the rural population suffered a negative growth of -7.91 per thousand per annum. This negative growth of population in the rural areas was not due to falling birth rates but indicates significantly accelerated rural to urban migration from the early 1980s. Figure 4.1 also illustrates a dramatic fall of the rural population, by contrast between 1980 and 1990 the urban population jumped by 52.85 per thousand a year. It appears that the 1980s marked a new phase of rapid urbanisation in Turkey. Furthermore, there is a positive correlation between the restructuring policies of the 1980s and dramatic population movement from rural to urban.

Not only have the salary and wage earners in the cities lost out since the 1980s the agricultural sector has also been badly affected by neoliberal economy policies. One of the objectives of the neoliberal-restructuring programme was the termination of low interest rates for agricultural loans and credits provided by the state owned *Ziraat Bankasi* (Agricultural Bank) and more importantly the abolition of agricultural subsidies crucial to maintaining small and medium sized farmers.

The 1980s in Turkey started with a military coup that was staged in 12 September 1980. It was for the third time since 1960 the country's military seized the power and dismantled all political structure; all political parties were closed down parliament and the government dismissed, trade unions, civil society organisations, all kinds of associations were outlawed, thousands were detained and interrogated. All kinds of politics banned, politicians were poisoned and later banned from politics. However the most lasting legacy of the coup was and has been the introduction of neoliberal restructuring policies that was already negotiated between IMF and the Demirel's government in 24 January 1979. The decision for a major economic restructuring was decided but the Demirel's government was nervous about its social political implications therefore its implementation was postponed until the military's action.

¹⁶⁴ See 1990 census of Population, 1993, p.28.

At the beginning of the 1980s the agricultural sector employed over 43 percent of the total population, today this rate is 34 percent. Therefore, it is plausible to argue that any policy change will automatically affect millions of lives. By the 1990s this sector was on the verge of collapse. This sector lost 25 percent of its share of the GDP, which fell from 24 % in 1984 to 18 % in 1990 (Tosun, 1999, p.172). This decline was reflected in a sharp decline of income in the rural population. As income steadily shrunk more and more people from rural areas sought employment in urban centres, thus causing the problem of over-urbanisation in the major cities.

4.2.3 The Problem of Over-urbanisation

There has been a great transformation in Third World countries. Unlike peasant societies of the 1940s and 1950s they now consist of large urban population. Since the 1950s underdeveloped countries urbanised rapidly so their urban population doubled in the 30 years to 1975. The rate of urbanisation increased even faster from 1975 to 1990. In 15 years it doubled again reaching 40 percent of the population of all Third World countries (Roberts, 1995, p.1-27).

What makes the urbanization process much more problematic in Turkish context is that the half of this urban population has been concentrated in Turkey's five mega-cities: Istanbul, Ankara, İzmir, Adana and Bursa and causing a rapid growth in the gecekondu population. (See Table 4.2).

From the early 1930s onwards urbanisation was seen as a means of modernisation and economic development in Turkey. It was believed that any systematic effort to transform traditional societies into modern societies must involve the development of cities and modern urban societies.¹⁶⁵ However, the way in which underdeveloped countries urbanised was very different to developed, industrialised nations'

¹⁶⁵ Pey quoted in Danielson and Keles, 1985, p.3.

urbanisation. For many reasons the underdeveloped countries could not repeat the same process in the way of urban growth.

Many developing countries, including Turkey, witnessed a rapid urbanisation from the 1950s. By the 1970s their urban population doubled, but the rate of urban growth did not match the rate of industrial growth in many of these countries. The gap that appeared in this process created a different kind of phenomenon known as 'over-urbanisation'. As M. Castells points out:

"The phenomenon ... known as over-urbanisation - a term that connotes the idea of a level of urbanisation higher than that which can 'normally' be attained, given the level of industrialisation. Over-urbanisation appears as an obstacle to development, in so far as it immobilises resources in the form of non-productive investments, necessary to the creation and organisation of services indispensable to great concentrations of population, whereas these countries do not justify themselves as centres of production." (Castells, 1977, p. 41).

According to Castells over-urbanisation is not only an imbalance between the growth rate of urban population and the level of industrialisation but also an obstacle to economic development due to the resources transferred to non-productive investments such as services for the urban population. If the urban population growth is not led by the demand for labour what then is the driving force of the over-urbanisation. Castells points out that there are two factors in the acceleration of the growth of urbanisation (a) an increase in the natural growth of population in the rural and urban areas, (b) rural-urban migration (ibid. 46). The increase in the rate of natural population growth is due to the advancement in the medical area. The question of the driving force of the rural-urban migration is rather complex. In Turkey the flood of migration from villages to cities has been caused more by the rural *push* than the urban *pull* since the 1950s but due to the major shifts in socioeconomic conditions the *push* factors has become much intolerable from the early 1980s.

In relation to the social and political implications of over-urbanisation Castells argues the concentration of high rate of unemployment and low standard of living can create

a fertile ground for political extremism (Ibid, p. 41). By providing a vast concentration of population in a space in a given time urbanisation facilitates social mobility and increases human/ individuals contact with others, and increases the chance of economic, social and political participation.

4.2.4 Urbanisation as the Facilitator of Political Participation

From the early 1950s onwards there has been a number of studies primarily concerned with the relationship between socio-economic condition and voting tendencies in the Western Europe and Northern America. These studies particularly focused on the relationship between the socio-economic conditions and voting behaviour of a particular community. An early empirical study of American voting behaviour concentrates on the 'social bases of American partisanship'. This study established an " *Index of Political Predispositions* based on social classes, religion, and rural/urban residency", and observed a strong correlation between voting behaviour and social class, religion and type of residency. (Dalton, 1988, p.152). Similarly Bell and Boat's (1956-7) study, in San Francisco, showed that family and socio-economic neighbourhood characteristics influence the development of informal group relations between friends, relatives, neighbours and co-workers'. A similar study carried out in Britain found a strong correlation between socio-economic class characteristics in a neighbourhood and voting behaviour (Berry, D 1970, p.34).

Political participation is expanded by modernisation in general and urbanisation in particular. Both played a very important role in the process by creating the social bases and networks of political participation for the larger sections of societies. Deutsch (1963) argues that urbanisation combined with other features of social mobilisation would increase the interaction and political communication of citizen to citizen and citizens to state. He also suggested that this could lead to greater awareness of citizens of the 'instrumental stakes of politics'. Similarly Learner (1958, p. 46) argues that historically urbanisation has been the first stage of modernisation and also the most important aspect of urbanisation, he argued, is the increase of political participation.

Almost twenty years later Roberts (1995) in his study of Latin American urbanisation points out that by introducing new political issues like age, gender and ethnicity alongside the those of living and working conditions urbanisation have been, in many ways, expended political participation among citizens. This expansion in citizens' political participation is led by what Inglehart, R (1977) called is "cognitive mobilization". He (cited in Inglehart, 1997, p. 168) argued that:

The coming of advanced industrial society leads to a syndrome of intergenerational changes that bring significant further increases in citizen intervention in politics. A Long-term rise in educational levels and in mass political skills has characterized all industrial societies. An extension of social mobilization beyond the transformations brought by urbanization and early industrialization, this process has been termed "cognitive mobilization". ... Cognitive mobilization is based on invisible changes that upgrade individual skills.

According to Inglehart (1997, p.169) mass political participation developed in two major stages, the first one was based on an older model of elite-led political participation. In this stage citizen mobilization led by the institutions such as political parties, trade unions, church etc., and it was a low level of participation mostly limited with voting. The second stage of political participation is called 'elite-challenging model' and because it requires a relatively high skill levels it facilitated by the development of cognitive mobilization. For Inglehart (1997, p.169) elite-challenging model of participation is issue oriented and based on hoc groups rather than on established institutions. It seeks particular policy changes rather than simply giving a blank check to a party elites.

These new issues in politics such as gender, ethnicity, identity and environmental concerns etc. arose from a major shift in the value system. According to Inglehart, R (1977, p.21) this value change from materialist to post-materialist values 'linked with a culsture of socio-economic changes including rising levels of education, changes in the occupational structure and developments in the sphere of mass communication networks.' The politics shifted away from old-politics that were dominated by materialist values to new-politics that determined by non-materialist or post-

materialist values. The value change occurred as one of the consequences of modernity and economic prosperity that West experienced since the Second World War (ibid, p.21-22). As Robertson (1995) pointed out in the last twenty years many of Third World countries has witnessed rapid urbanization that has created new middle classes as well as pulling millions of poor from rural areas. This process inevitably introduced new issues into politics as well as heightening the old political issues such as living and working conditions, unemployment, poverty, and like.

In addition, in the urban context the networks of participation are now denser than they were in the past and less family oriented. There has been an increase in the flow and quality of information because citizens have better and easy access to mass media. Also thanks to mass media, the wrongdoing and failures of the rulers can be transmitted across the nation immediately (Roberts, 1995, p. 211). What we can say of Roberts' analysis of political participation in Latin American experience is that the process of urbanisation in developing countries followed a different path and created social problems, yet urbanisation broadens the social bases of political participation. The emerge of new political issues such as gender and ethnicity indicates the emerge of a new kind of citizens that are more worldly-wise, self conscious, better educated and demanding. He/she is not just preoccupied with the work and living conditions but some other issues which are less economic more social, cultural or ethnic.¹⁶⁶ Nevertheless, Roberts points out a fundamental characteristic of developing countries: "The fear of poverty is as much a preoccupation of the majority of the population as it was in early periods of urbanisation" (Ibid. 19-20). Perhaps not surprisingly following Roberts' (1995) findings one can detect several parallels between the urban centres and living conditions of the urban poor in Latin America and in Turkey.

¹⁶⁶ According to Inglehart (1997, p. 237) "ethnic and cultural issues are becoming more prominent. Economic conflicts are increasingly sharing the stage with new issues that were almost invisible a generation ago: environmental protection, abortion, ethnic conflicts, women's issues and gay and lesbian emancipation are heated issues today."

The unprecedented rise of the WP in 1994 and 1995 elections was strongly related to the process of rapid urbanisation that took place between 1980 and 1990. The WP gained the largest share of the municipalities across the country securing 19 % of the votes and 26 municipalities out of 72 provincial capitals including Istanbul and Ankara.¹⁶⁷ According to Shmuelewitz (1996, p. 175) there is a direct relationship between migration and rise of the WP/VP.¹⁶⁸ What we have seen is that from the early 1980s due to the neoliberal economic policies a second wave of rapid urbanisation took place.

4.3 The Implications of Rapid Urbanisation

4.3.1 Economic Consequences and the Growth of Shantytowns

The social base of party support in certain areas is determined by the socioeconomic characteristics (income level, type of occupation, and level of education) in the studied areas. Despite the fact that many observers discredit class cleavages, they play an important role in voting behaviour in Turkey.¹⁶⁹

Both the sub-districts Keçiören and Mamak have a large proportion of *gecekondu* settlements. This means both districts are home to thousands of poor, lower and lower middle class residents. Mamak obviously has a larger number of *gecekondu* houses.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁷ Margulies and Yildizoglu, 1997, p. 144

¹⁶⁸ Shmuelewitz (1996, p. 175) argued that " There is no doubt that the continued waves of immigrants to the big cities and the continued socio-economic crisis, which the coalition governments of the centre-moderate right and the left of centres parties did not yet managed to solve, only strengthened the trends which appeared in the elections of 1991 towards the extremism, especially towards the religious right as the most promising option to solve the crisis."

¹⁶⁹ For an analysis of 'old politics' and 'new politics' see Dalton & Kuechler, 1990, Challenging the Political Order; Pakulski, J. 1991, Social Movements, pp.25-51; Russell J. Dalton, 1988, Citizen Politics in Western Democracies, pp. 151-176.

¹⁷⁰ For a quick reminder. I have dealt with the socio-economic characteristics of Ankara in brief and in some detail sub districts of Keçiören and Mamak in chapter 1. I shall not repeat the facts here.

Historically first *gecekondus* emerged on the outskirts of rapidly expanding cities from the 1950s.¹⁷¹ From the sociological point of view *gecekondulaşma* (squatterisation) was due to a growth of population that was not matched by industrial growth.¹⁷² When we focus on the historical development of the phenomenon of the *gecekondulaşma* we notice its dual dimensions- quantitative and qualitative. The quantitative dimension refers to the numbers of *gecekondus* and their populations and the rate of *gecekondu* dwellers within the general population. From 1950 onwards the numbers of *gecekondu* and their population have been increasing.

As with many other rapidly urbanising countries newcomers responded to the lack of regular housing by occupying state owned land illegally and built *gecekondu* houses. *Gecekondu* settlements soon become the main source of housing (Danielson and Keleş, 1985, p.41). There seems to be a wide gap between the growth of population and the growth of industrial investment in the major Turkish cities since the 1950s.

Table: 4.2 The Growth of Turkey's Five Largest Cities: 1950-1990

CITIES	1950 (000)	1960 (000)	1970 (000)	1980 (000)	1990 (000)	GROWTH INDEX (1950=100)
Istanbul	983	1,467	2,132	4,433	7,309	744
Ankara	289	650	1,236	1,878	3,236	1120
İzmir	228	361	521	1,096	2,694	1119
Adana	118	232	347	575	1,934	1640
Bursa	104	154	276	445	1,603	1540

Source: Danielson and Keleş (1985, p.50) and 1990 Censuses of Population, State Institute of Statistic, Printing Division, October 1993.

In Turkey rapid urbanization was a respond to the major socio-economic shifts that occurred from the early 1950s, however as mentioned earlier, since the 1980s there has been another major restructurization of the Turkish economy that led to the second phase of rapid migration from rural to urban centres. It was this second phase of rapid migration that changed the population balance from rural to urban. In less

¹⁷¹ "Over-urbanisation" as one of the key concept of urban studies has been discussed by many Western as well as Turkish writers. See for example Michael N. Danielson and Rusen Keles, The Politics of Rapid urbanization, 1985 , pp.38-39; M. Castells, 1977, The Urban Question, pp. 41-43.

¹⁷² Danielson and Keles, 1985, p.38.

than twenty years urban population increased from 19.6 million in 1980 to 40.8 million in 1997 (see table 4.1).

Table 4.2 shows that migration was concentrated around the five largest cities: Istanbul, Ankara, İzmir, Adana and Bursa. From 1945 to 1990 Turkey's population multiplied by 3.04. While the urban population multiplied by 9.67, this rate was just 1.45 among the rural population. Istanbul's population grew by 7.44 while Ankara's population multiplied by 11.20, and Izmir's population multiplied 11.19 times.

The second phase of rapid urbanisation took place between 1985 and 1990. During this period Turkey's population increased 21.71 per thousand per year. In Istanbul, however, this rate was more than twice (44.78 per thousand per year) the national average, Ankara's population grew (21.28 per thousand per year) slower than Istanbul's but was still higher than national average, in İzmir it was 30.14, in Adana 22.86, and in Bursa 38.26 per thousand per year. Even some cities like Antalya grew as much as 47.88 per thousand per year, making the difference of population increase more visible in between rural and urban areas.¹⁷³

Although in the 1950s urbanisation was led by industrial growth and economic vitality in the cities in the 1950s, the massive population flowing from the countryside to cities soon exhausted the jobs and housing facilities created by the industrial growth. The reason for this rapid urbanisation, apart from a short period, was the 'push' factors of rural Anatolia.¹⁷⁴

Keyder (1987, p.136) argued that under the impact of rapid urbanisation as experienced in most developing countries the shantytown became a tangible correlative of substantial demographic movements reflecting the dramatic flow of population into urban areas. It created serious implications and upheavals in social balance. Following the massive migration there appeared a belt of *gecekondus* that grew rapidly and soon encircled all of these expanding cities.

¹⁷³ See 1990 census of Population, 1993, p.28.

¹⁷⁴ I am using the term 'push' factors as Castells, (1977, p. 41) used.

According to Peker (1996, p.19) between 1980 and 1985 2.9 million people migrated and vast majority (two-third) of them ended up working irregularly in the low income marginal sectors. By 1995 over one third (35 percent) of all urban population is lived in the gecekondu areas. In the first instance it may not appear as a significantly high ratio of urban population but we must remember that the vast majority of gecekondu has been concentrated around Turkey's five largest cities.

Table: 4. 3 Ratio of *Gecekond* (Squatter) Population within the Urban Population: 1955-1995

Years	Number of units	Number of Individuals	Ratio of gecekondu population Within the Urban Population
1955	50,000	250,000	4.7
1960	240,000	1,200,000	16.4
1965	430,000	2,150,000	22.9
1970	600,000	3,000,000	23.6
1980	1,150,000	5,750,000	26.1
1990	1,750,000	8,750,000	33.9
1995	2,000,000	10,000,000	35.0 *

Source: Keleş R, Kentleşme politikası, İmge Kitabevi, Ankara, 1993: 383; * Kongar, 2000: 566.

As argued previously over-urbanisation has been the most challenging problem facing Turkey since the 1950s. A key indicator of over-urbanisation is the ever-expanding shantytown encircling the main Turkish cities. The quantitative dimension of gecekondu in predominantly urbanised Turkey has great significance for this study because the WP/VP gets the bulk of its urban support from gecekondu areas.

As shown in table 4.3 in 1955 gecekondu consisted of only 4.7 percent of the urban population. The ratio increased almost four times (16.4 % in 1960) in five years, by 1970 this trend slowed down slightly 23.6 % and 26.1 % in 1980. By 1990 gecekondu consisted of 33.9 percent of urban population indicating a relatively high increase since the 1980s. In 1995 there were two million gecekondu and 10 millions gecekondu dwellers that make up more than one third (35 %) of whole urban population in Turkey.

However, as it has been observed by some researchers that the most of urban population growth has been concentrated around those big cities that has population of one million or more (See Kongar E 2000, p.556-57). Thus, the ratio of gecekondu population is far greater in those largest cities. For instance gecekondu population

Table: 4. 4 Squatter Housing in Ankara 1950-1990*

Years	Number of Squatter Houses	Number of People Living in Squatter Housing	Percentage of Population Living in Squatter Housing
1950	12,000	62,400	21.8
1960	70,000	364,000	56.0
1970	144,000	748,000	60.6
1980	275,000	1,450,000	72.4
1990*	350,000	1,750,000	58.4**

Source: Figures 1950-80 taken from Danielson and Keleş, 1985:166

* Figures for 1990 taken from Keleş R, *Kentleşme politikası*, İmge Kitabevi, Ankara, 1993,p.384.

** The fall in the ratio of gecekondu housing from 72.4 % in 1980 to 58.4 in 1990 in Ankara is unlikely to indicate a slowdown in the rate of urbanization/squatterisation in the 1990 in general but it might be an indication of rapid transformation of old gecekondu areas -while the new gecekondu areas growing -into authorised apartments in Ankara (See Ozdemir N, 1999).

makes up to 70 per cent of Ankara (in 1980) and 58.4 (in 1997), 55 per cent in Istanbul and 50 percent in İzmir (see Gökce, 1996, p.92). This figure clearly indicates that between half and two third of all Istanbul, Ankara and İzmir are consists of gecekondu population. A close examination of Ankara's demographic make up can be helpful for a better understanding of political significant of gecekondu areas in general and electoral success of WP/VP in particular.

M. Kemal chose Ankara as the capital city of modern and secular republic in the early 1920s and it has been one of the fastest growing cities in Turkey. In the 1920s Ankara was a small Anatolian town with its around 20,000 population (Keleş, 1971, pp.1-2). By 1950 its population was 289,000, 650,000 (in 1960) 1,236,000 (in 1970), 1,878,000 (in 1980), 3,236, 000 (in 1990) and in 2000 its population reached to 4,007,

860. Between 1990 and 2000 Ankara's population increased 21.37 %o(See table 4.2)

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Parallel to increase of Ankara's population we see an increase on the ratio of gecekondu population. In 1950 there was 12,000 gecekondu and 62,400 gecekondu dwellers consisting of only 21.8 % of population, following decade we see a five fold increase in the numbers of gecekondu (70,000) accommodating 364,000 gecekondu dwellers making up 56 percent of Ankara's population. By 1970 there were 144,000 gecekondu 748,000 gecekondu inhabitants making up 60.6 percent of population. Following decade the numbers of gecekondu went up to 275,000 and its population doubled to 1,450,00 making almost three quarter (72.4 %) of Ankara's population. According to a latest estimate by the 1990 58.4 percent of Ankara's population lived in gecekondu. There were 350,000 gecekondu with 1, 750,000 inhabitants. (Gökce, 1996, p.92). Unfortunately, obtaining an accurate, consistent and up-to-date data on gecekondu has not been easy for the students of social sciences in Turkey. The reason for this is the State Statistics Institution that is the only institution for nationwide statistics is not collecting data on gecekondu areas. However it is plausible to expect a decrease on the rate of squatter settlements within the total urban population in Ankara, because of the transformation of gecekondu settlements into authorised apartment blocks.¹⁷⁶ Nevertheless, the ratio of squatter settlements is still 58.4 percent and constitutes a great significance.

4.3.2 Gecekondu Under the Restructuring Policies

The 1980s were a turning point in many senses that brought major shifts in the direction of the economy and politics in Turkey. The structural adjustment programme, which was backed if not imposed by the IMF and the World Bank and aimed to replace the closed, interventionist economic model with the neoliberal market economy had a profound impact on Turkish society. Undoubtedly the socio-

¹⁷⁵ See http://www.die.gov.tr/nufus_sayimi/02012002T3.jpg

¹⁷⁶ See for example, Nihan Özdemir's unpublished Ph.D. thesis on The Transformation of Squatter Settlements into Authorised Apartment Blocks: A Case Study of Ankara, Turkey. Submitted at the University of Kent at Canterbury, 1999. She has studied two districts of Ankara Keçiören and Çankaya in where this transformation of gecekondu into apartment blocks took place.

economic and political implications of these restructuring programmes have been tremendous.¹⁷⁷

By the late 1970s Turkey's economic crisis had deepened. Coupled with widespread social unrest, increased violence and political killings in the streets this led to the military seizure of power on 12 September 1980.¹⁷⁸ The military government is widely seen as an opportunity for the big bourgeoisie to implement the IMF's well-known '24th January' [1979] decisions adopted by the conservative Demirel government but which had not been implemented.

Soon after the military coup (1980) the Chief of the General Staff made a speech in which he plainly and explicitly extended his support for the neoliberal, restructuring programmes.¹⁷⁹ Because the big business like TÜSİAD accused the successive governments for their 'populist policies' that made the work force uncontrollable and leading to the failure of economic model. Therefore it was believed that the labour market must be reorganised under an authoritarian regime (Tosun, 1999, p.146). As Vehbi Koç, one of the most prominent representatives of the big business explained:

Before the 12 September action we had to do everything under the democratic system. It was necessary to spend months to pass an amendment or a law. ...The difference under the military government is that because you do not need to pass the decisions and laws from parliament everything is so fast, even when they make a mistake they correct it quickly without any political approach. It was because; they have no fear of losing seat in the parliament or losing the voters' faith.¹⁸⁰

Koç was not just justifying the military coup but also expressing how big business was desperately in need of the radical economic reforms made possible by it. The main objectives of the restructuring programme were as follows:

¹⁷⁷ For a detailed analysis of structural adjustment programme and its impacts see collection of essays in Eralp, A, Tünay, M and Yeşilada, B, 1993; Boratav, K. 1990; "Inter-Class and Intra-Class Relations of Distribution under 'Structural Adjustment' :Turkey during the 1980s" pp.199-230, in (eds.) Arıcanlı, T and Rodrik, D 1990; Öniş Z and Webb, S, 1993 pp. 128-184; See also Ziya Öniş, 1997, The Political economy of Islamic resurgence in Turkey: the rise of the Welfare Party in perspective" *Third World Quarterly*, Vol.18, pp. 743-76. Ramazanoğlu, H, 1985, *Turkey in the World Capitalist System*, Gower Publishing Company Ltd.

¹⁷⁸ For some accounts of the military rule of 12 September 1980 see: C. H. Dodd, 1990, *The Crisis of Turkish Democracy*, The Eothen Press; Çetin Yetkin, 1995, *Türkiye'de Askeri Darbeler ve Amerika* (Turkey's Military Coups and America), Ümit Yayıncılık, Ankara; and also see, William Hale, 1994, *Turkish politics and the Military*, Rutledge, London.

¹⁷⁹ For an account of the economy politics of the military regime see: Tosun, T 1997: pp.145-148.

¹⁸⁰ *Cumhuriyet*, 26 Ocak 1982 (*Cumhuriyet* January 26,1982) quoted in Tosun, T 1999:146.

- 1) The economy to be exposed to free market forces and international competition;
 - 2) Private sector to be supported and public investment to be restricted;
 - 3) A rapid and extensive privatisation programme that meant the privatisation of the State Economic Enterprises;
 - 4) Encouragement of exports and foreign capital with all available means, various incentive measures were taken;
 - 5) Devaluation of the Turkish Lira.
 - 6) Keeping wages and salaries at low levels. In order to achieve this goal the trade union and collective bargaining legislation was changed.
 - 7) And finally, but very importantly, agricultural subsidies to be abolished altogether.
- (See Dodd, 1990, p.101; Ramazanoglu, 1985, pp 220-242).

This so called structural adjustment programme consisted of extensive privatisation, closure of many state owned enterprises, mass redundancies from the public sector, rolling back the state from economic areas in favour of private investment, flexibility of the labour market, increasing sub-contracting, restrictions on unionisation. Turkey was introduced to the neoliberal economic model by Turgut Özal who founded the Motherland Party (MP), a centre right party, in power from 1983 until 1991.

By the mid 1980s there was a stiff rise in the urban population in contrast to the sharp decline of the rural population. Between 1980 and 1997 many millions of people were added to the cities' poorest sections in the gecekondu areas. No doubt this high rate of migration during the 1980s and 1990s automatically added many new social and economic problems to the ever-expanding gecekondu. Gecekondu were already considered the poorest sections of the urban population. For years this population was badly affected by countless austerity programmes that had been frequently imposed by successive governments.

It can be argued that structural adjustment policies have been more destructive in Turkey especially on the urban poor. Every economy has its specific characteristics. Privatisation is one of the main pillars of neoliberalism and can have devastating consequences in a country where the state acts as the locomotive force of economic development. In Turkey, for example, up until the 1980s, for historical reasons such as the lack of an industrial bourgeois class, the state was very active in the economic

sphere. Since the 1930s the state has been the main entrepreneur for infrastructure investments: roads, bridges, electricity, irrigation to industrial production in areas like coal, mining, steel, cement, sugar; from the financial sector: banking, insurance to state monopoly of the production of cigarette, alcoholic drink and the salt; and from services to agriculture.

In fact, the public share of capital in the State-owned Enterprises (*Kamu İktisadi Tesebbüsleri*) is nearly 50 percent of the total capital. The government employs 3 out of 8 million regularly employed workers (Cam, 1999, p.697). Thus, it is plausible to argue that, throughout the 1980s and the 1990s the implementation of neoliberal restructuring programmes like the privatisation of public enterprises, deregulation of the labour market, restrictions on unionisation or collective bargaining, increased subcontracting, temporary or part time employment,¹⁸¹ had a profound impact on the wage and salary earners; low and lower middle class, the poor, landless and small peasantry, shopkeepers and artisans.

Consequently, as is evident from table 4.5 the share of wages in the GNP sharply declined from 26.7 percent in 1980; 24.6 percent in 1981 and 82; 24.8 % in 1983; 21.6 % in 1984; 18.8 % in 1985; 17.5 % in 1986; 17.0 % in 1987 and finally to 14.0 % in 1988. The decline of the share of wages within the GNP meant a loss of one-half of real wages for most ordinary wage earners. As a result of neoliberal economic policies, particularly the low wage and income transfer policies, the gap between the richest 20 percent and the poorest 20 percent of households widened further. For example the share of total disposable income for the poorest quintile household within the TGNP was 5.24 percent in 1987 and 4.86 percent in 1994. On the contrary the share of the richest quintile household received from TGNP rose from 49.94 percent in 1987 to 54.88 percent in 1994.

Consequently Turkey became one of the five worst countries alongside Brazil, Chile, Colombia and Mexico, in terms of unequal income distribution.¹⁸² A parallel process involving the index of real wages shows a substantial decline in wages between 1976 and 1986. Real wages fell more than 50 percent in ten years. The index of 100 in 1976

¹⁸¹ See Peker, 1996.

¹⁸²Tosun, 1999, pp. 179-180.

fell to 49 in 1985 (Boratav, 1990, pp. 206-207). This means that the wage and salary earners and their dependents, lost 50.9 percent of their income in less than ten years. Undoubtedly, under the restructuring programme the cities were most affected. Especially the urban poor living in low-income *gecekondü* areas were forced to take a second or sometimes third jobs, in order to provide the daily bread.

Table: 4.5 GDP Shares of the Different Types of Income Between 1980 and 1988

Income Types %	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988
Agricultural Incomes	23.9	23.0	21.8	20.5	20.4	19.1	18.1	17.6	15.8
non-agricultural Incomes	76.1	76.9	78.2	79.5	79.6	80.9	81.7	82.4	84.2
Wages	26.7	24.6	24.6	24.8	21.6	18.8	17.5	17.0	14.0
Income Other Than Wages	49.5	52.4	53.5	54.7	58.0	62.1	64.2	65.4	70.2
GNP Growth Rates	-1.1	4.1	4.5	3.3	5.9	5.1	8.0	7.4	3.4

Source: Özmucur, H 1989, (quoted by Baharoglu, D. 1993, p.74).

The IMF-designed restructuring programmes, however, did not solve the major shortcomings of the Turkish economy. Since the 1980s the high rate of inflation has been eroding, on a daily basis, already low wages and salaries. There have been many economic austerity programmes supposedly designed for economic recovery, but so far, without exception, all have failed to achieve to that goal. As Theo Nichols (1996, p. 2) argued 'continuing IMF and World Bank policy interventions have made the distribution of income in Turkey among the most polarized in the world'. Those who lived on agricultural incomes witnessed a dramatic (44 percent) fall in income. The share of agricultural incomes within the GNP was 23.9 percent in 1980 but fell to 20.4 in 1984 and 15.8 percent by 1988.

There are two important points to make. The first one is that the neoliberal economic policies, by causing income disparities, disintegrated rural life so that millions of peasants had to seek employment in the cities. The second point is that the low wages

and salary policies deepened the poverty of the millions of urban dwellers in the cities. The low wage policy of the 1980s hit worst the *gecekondu* areas, inhabited by millions of newcomer migrants of the rapidly growing cities.

The declining income in the villages was due to accelerated internal migration. Millions of villagers moved to cities where they again faced a declining trend of wages and salaries. The low wage policy was a deliberate attempt to curb internal demand while increasing exports. Also this low wage policy was designed as a vehicle of income transfer from the wages and salaries of millions of people including the lower middle classes to the interests and profits of a small minority. The rationale behind the income transfer was to materialise the elusive capital accumulation and by doing so, the ruling elite and bourgeoisie sought to solve the deepened economic crisis.

4.3.3 The Political Implications of Rapid Urbanisation

The first political implication of the expansion of *gecekondu*s was in the growth of local politics. Between 1945 and 1990 the numbers of municipalities increased nearly four times (352 percent) from 583 municipalities in 1945 to 2053 in 1990. In line with the massive growth of *gecekondu* areas there was increasing need and political pressure on the central government for the provision of infrastructure and services. Therefore the political significance of *gecekondu*s increased.

The second implication has been the shift of electoral preferences of *gecekondu* dwellers. Studies show that there have been important electoral swings from time to time in *gecekondu* areas.¹⁸³ It was observed that throughout the 1950s and 1960s culture of optimism was prevalent among *gecekondu* dwellers. But this economic growth and culture of optimism was undermined by the economic stagnation deepened by the lack of foreign currency and the unforeseen petrol crisis in the mid 1970s. The optimism the first generation of migrants enjoyed gradually faded away. In this crisis atmosphere, as Özbudun (1976, p.106) points out, the Republican

¹⁸³ See Danielson and Keles 1985, pp.101-110 ; Karpat, 1975, p. 89-199 ; Hale, 1981, pp. 117-127; Özbudun, 1976, pp. 200-205; Shmuelevitz, 1996, pp. 162-193.

People's Party (RPP) moved to the left, stressing the need for greater equity and attention to the problems of the poor.

Table: 4. 6 Party Support by Type of Housing Area in the National Elections, 1965-1973

City	Election Years (National Elections)								
	1965			1969			1973		
	JP	RPP	Oth	JP	RPP	Oth.	JP	RPP	Oth.*
Istanbul	52.0	30.4	17.6	47.8	33.8	18.4	28.5	48.9	22.6
Gecekondus	62.4	19.1	18.5	53.8	21.8	24.4	26.7	47.5	25.8
Ankara	46.5	30.2	23.3	42.4	36.0	21.0	29.2	44.8	26.0
Gecekondus	52.5	25.8	21.7	43.4	30.1	26.5	27.7	45.9	26.4
Izmir	62.1	29.8	8.0	53.2	35.1	11.7	40.9	44.6	14.5
Gecekondus	72.1	17.0	10.9	60.7	22.6	16.7	36.5	44.2	19.3

- **JP**= The Justice Party (Conservative), **RPP**= The Republican People's Party (Left of centre, Oth. = Other Parties (Includes **NSP** The National Salvation Party and **TLP** The Turkish Labour Party and some other small parties).
- ****** City rows of data do not include *gecekondus* in these particular cities. They were estimated separately.

Source: Danielson and Keleş, The politics of Rapid Urbanisation, pp. 107-109.

As shown in table 4.6 voting preferences drastically changed. Throughout the 1970s, the slide of lower income voters towards the left accelerated. Two decades later, a very similar swing on the voting behaviour of *gecekondus* dwellers has occurred. As the neoliberal restructuring programmes went ahead, they created enormous inequalities, unemployment, income losses, growing uncertainty, abandonment of social security policies, millions of new migrants in the cities and so on.

As mentioned above the impacts of the neoliberal policies have been much more brutal on the *gecekondus* population, so there has been a significant swing in voting behaviour. This time, (in the 1990s), *gecekondus* chose to support the Welfare Party for precisely the same reasons they supported the RPP in the 1970s. The WP/VP has

been the only party that seems to care for the problems of the urban poor and pay attention to the demand for social justice and equality.¹⁸⁴

Undoubtedly the 1990s was a decade of great expectations in many senses but it was rather a disappointment for large sections of society in Turkey. Mainly the lower middle and lower classes, the urban poor, and the Kurdish minority were increasingly disaffected with the mainstream centre left and centre right parties and slid toward the WP in the millions.

The 1990s witnessed two important developments as well. First was the emergence of the gecekondu areas as a key electoral force. The second was the process of party convergence leading to the collapse of the Social Democrat party. In this atmosphere the WP/VP emerged as the 'one guard' of the exploited poverty stricken urban masses. With its promise of *Adil Düzen* (Just Society), greater equality, restoration of the state's role in the economy, and clean/ uncorrupted government and its very well organised, very active and committed grassroots activists the WP/VP appealed to the gecekondu dwellers more strongly than any other parties.

4.4 Conclusion

This chapter was an attempt to illuminate the modern faces of political Islam. It is argued that contrary to common belief, Islamist movements are the product of the process of modernisation and rapid urbanisation. They emerged and flourished in rapidly urbanised societies rather than rural towns or traditional communities. As is evident from my own empirical data on grassroots activists of the pro-Islamic Fazilet (Virtue) Party the cadres of these Islamic movements are educated in western style modern schools. They tend to be better educated than the majority, with a higher level of occupation and income. In the meantime the activists and leading figures may have anti imperialist attitudes but to view these movements, as a threat to the West would be misleading.

It was argued that the peasant societies of Third World countries in the 1940s and 1950s underwent a great transformation and within thirty years became the urbanised

¹⁸⁴ See Ayata, S 1993, pp. 51-67; Çakır, 1994, p.223; Kalaycıoğlu, 1996, pp. 403-424; *Milliyet*, (Istanbul daily) January 22, 1999; Özbudun, p. 88 and Shmuelewitz, 1996, p.168.

societies of the 1980 and 1990s. Likewise, many underdeveloped Muslim countries, such as Iran and Egypt, also experienced rapid rural to urban migration and faced the social, economic, cultural and political consequences of it. It has been highlighted that there is a positive correlation between urbanisation and political participation. Urbanisation, in various ways, expands the social basis of political participation. As participation gains a more rational and less family/tradition orientation the numbers of the networks of participation increase as well. With urbanisation the rate of literacy and newspaper readership grows. Due to developments in new information technologies communication and information transformation becomes ever easier. Today an ordinary citizen can have an extraordinary amount of information at his reach.

Since the 1950s Turkey witnessed a rapid urbanisation process. However, the pattern of urbanisation has been very different compared to developed western countries. Urbanisation of the developing countries was not led by a significant industrialisation or economic development, but was created merely by the factors of *rural push*. Because the over-urbanisation- in Turkey was led by *rural push* rather than *urban pull* it was prone to cause social problems. One of the most noticeable phenomena following the rapid urbanisation was the *gecekondu* settlement that enveloped the metropolitan areas. Due to the lack of resources for housing the newcomers took the initiative and built their own houses. In fact they have created their own cities in many cases.

Perhaps, it is time now to consider the relationship between neoliberal restructuring programmes implemented since the 1980s, which are a significant part of globalisation process and the unprecedented rise of the WP/VP throughout the 1990s. Is there any sign of an alternative to this process? Can the rise of the WP/VP be interpreted as an alternative movement against neoliberal policies?

It has been observed that global capitalism has significantly eroded the functions and the borders of nation states. One of the consequences of globalisation is the end of the nation state. As a result national level governance has become ineffective (Hirst and Thompson 1996, pp.175-195). This development has also undermined the ability of governments and political parties to govern. International corporations have increasingly taken over the nation states' space by pushing them out of both

economics and politics. In this process they have acquired increasing power to dictate policies of taxation, privatisation, flexible labour markets and other issues suit their interests. This influence often takes the form of IMF led economic "restoration" or "stability" programmes and usually tied to new credit.

As Guehenon, 1995 (cited by Hague, R et al 1998, pp.36-37) argues, "the demand of the global economy has transformed politics into management". He claims that "governments no longer make choices, they simply manage their country's engagement with global markets" The expansion of economics in the form of neoliberalism has left very limited room for politics. The very essence of politics has been negated. It is left without any purpose or function. Inevitably, extremely weakened politics has caused widespread apathy among citizens. Because politics is reduced to management, voters lose interest and simply turn away from it. The best example of this can be found among western democracies. For example in Britain, 42 percent of voters did not bother to vote at the last general election in June 2001. It is estimated that voter turnout in that general election fell to 58% - "the lowest level of popular participation for such an event in more than 80 years." ¹⁸⁵ As neoliberalism takes over the world on the back of globalisation, it creates inequality, injustice, poverty and misery for millions, as well as dissent and dissatisfaction. As a result the majority of the urban poor become hopeless and turn away from politics.

This is not so in the Turkish case. As the neoliberal restructuring policies obliterated everything in their way the urban poor of the *gecekond* areas increasingly politicised and raised their voice against this process. By voting, supporting the WP/VP or becoming party activists the urban poor actually make a strong statement. They declare that they will not give in or surrender to global capitalism but instead will fight against it. The poor urban communities indicate their dissatisfaction with the whole process and show their intention to create an alternative by throwing their own leaders into arena and unite around the WP/VP who is opposed to this process. The

¹⁸⁵ See "A strong case of election apathy" *BBC* Tuesday, 5 June, 2001, http://news.bbc.co.uk/vote2001/hi/english/features/newsid_1371000/1371191.stm)

WP/VP offer a kind of third way-*Adil Düzen* (Just Society)-between capitalism and socialism.¹⁸⁶

I argue that as a result of neoliberal economic policies, millions migrated from villages to the periphery of the major urban centres. There they were further disappointed and disillusioned with the mainstream political establishment. This dissatisfaction of the urban masses due to the economic crisis and political instability changed voting patterns. At times of crisis, especially among those newcomers, there is a tendency to turn to extremes, both on the right and the left.¹⁸⁷ The urban middle lower and lower classes and the under classes of the *gecekondus* sought an alternative to the incompetent, corrupt, elite mainstream politics.

In the 1990s the *gecekondus* areas, more recently known as *varoşlar*, became the main battleground for political power. Today the three major cities of Istanbul, Ankara and Zaire, where the majority of MP's are elected, and the *gecekondus* with their large population hold the electoral balance. It was pointed out that at the last general elections (1995) the majority of those urban poor who earned between \$ 654 - 1000 a year voted for the Islamist WP.¹⁸⁸ The Islamist WP/VP emerged as the party of social justice and prosperity, as their names imply. Many scholars noted that the WP with its *Adil Düzen* (Just Society) fills the gap left by the decline of the centre-left RPP due to its privatisation programme while in power (1991-1995). By using this historic opportunity the WP strengthened its position amongst the urban poor and disadvantaged masses by giving voice to their grievances, concerns and identity problems.

The WP/VP has a massive and very active grassroots organisation in action not only at election time but all year around. As one of my grassroots activist informants told me, "We are not 'seasonal workers' like the other parties' activists.¹⁸⁹ We are permanent workers in our neighbourhood". They work as social workers and do a lot

¹⁸⁶ The WP/VP as argued in chapter 2 and 3 the only modern mass based political party and opposed the neoliberal economy policies. It has proposed a kind of social democratic economy policies called as *Adil Düzen* (Just Order). Also see Özbudun, 2000, p.88.

¹⁸⁷ Shmuelevitz, 1996, p. 168.

¹⁸⁸ See Milliyet, January 22, 1999.

¹⁸⁹ The term seasonal worker takes it's meaning from an employment practice common in Turkey. There are thousands of people who work for government on seasonal contracts e.g. in the agricultural sector seasonal workers usually work 3 or 4 months in summer in a year.

of social work in the *gecekondu* neighbourhoods, being consistent not only a few months before the elections but throughout the year.

Considering the surprise election successes of the NAP in the last general elections in 18 April, 1999 one can say that the NAP undertook major changes in its leadership, some of its main policies and adopted new campaign strategy and tactics that the WP/VP used effectively.¹⁹⁰ In the last general elections there were two very surprising results; one was the Democratic Left Party (DLP) that doubled its share of vote from 10.8 % in 1995 to 22.3 percent, the second was even more surprising; the ultra Nationalist Action Party (NAP) which has increased its share of vote 10 percent from 8.2 % in 1995 to 18.1 percent in 1999 (see table 2.2). It was a big surprise that even the NAP's leadership found hard to contemplate.¹⁹¹ However there is a sociological explanation for both parties' unprecedented election successes.

Both parties have done so well because they share something quite similar. Both are the nationalist parties; the NAP is on the extreme right of the political spectrum and the DLP is again nationalist party on the left side of the spectrum. When analysed the political and electoral background it can be seen that both parties seized the wind that was created by the capture of Kurdish Separatist leader Abdullah Ocala in Nairobi-Kenya on 15 February 1999, just two months before the elections. A. Öcalan that being charged with treason and killing of 35 000 people during the 15 years brutal conflict in the Southeast Anatolia was captured with a special operation by the Turkish security forces and flown to Turkey with a big publicity. This spectacular capture provided an enormous political prestige and credit for the Bulent Ecevit and his party the DLP that was in office as a minority government with Motherland Party (MP). The MP a centre-right party that was weakened by endless corruption charges (e.g. Turkbank scandal) and its dissatisfying policies in previous government as well. On contrast the veteran leader of the DLP Bulent Ecevit has been renounced with his honesty and clean image in politics.

¹⁹⁰ Çakır R, 1998b, "The NAP after Turkes", Istanbul daily *Milliyet*, 29 September 1998.

¹⁹¹ *Hurriyet* (Istanbul daily) 1999, "The big success surprised the NAP too" 21 April 1999.

The 1999 general and local elections-at the same time- were held in a background of extreme climax of corruption scandals that rocked nearly all political parties and politicians and under the shadow of the '*Susurluk event*' that reviled the deep running unlawful connections between hundreds of bureaucrats, upper echelons of political parties and politicians especially both centre-right parties of TPP, MP and Mafia. It was Ecevit's DLP and at some extent the NAP was left untouched by the climax of corruption scandals.

The NAP was established thirty years ago and until 1999 it has always been on the fringe of political spectrum. But since death of Türkeş it has transformed itself from an old style extreme right to conservative centre-right party. Especially the death of its long-term leader Alpaslan Türkeş -an ex-officer involved with a military coup in the 1960 and fired from the army – also he was very much involved with extreme street violence that Turkey experienced in the late 1970s. Upon his death the NAP selected a new leader; Devlet Bahçeli an academic and his restructuring policy changed the image of NAP from a gang-like, mafia-involved extreme nationalist party to a much liberal, peaceful, system-party. Its new outlook was declared as "struggle against globalisation while doing that they wanted to avoid the trap of *culturelism* of new left". They claimed that the 21-century will be century of Turks' and claimed to transform Turkey to "a leader country in the global scale" (Çakır R, 1998b). NAP leader D. Bahçeli declared their main aim as the fulfilment of the public demand for a "clean society" obviously referring the extremely corrupted political elite. Its main election slogan was the struggle against poverty and corruption that both were the centre issues of the 1999 elections.¹⁹²

After the death of its ex-leader Türkeş the NAP spend a quiet and difficult year. But just before the elections it seems it regained its confidence and quite confident to make real electoral gains. It seems the party accepted D. Bahçelis leadership. In addition Bahçeli himself there are many academics in the party. He has got many lecturers and retired bureaucrats as his advisory board. All plans prepared in order to gain at least 10 percent of the vote. In our meetings in Anatolia with the members of *Luke Ocular* (NAP's local organisations) everyone seemed confident to obtain at least 10 percent of vote (Çakır R, 1998b).

¹⁹² Milliyet 1999, "The aim is a clean society", 29 April 1999.

Before the elections in 18 April 1999, the NAP adopted the some of the WP/VP's campaign strategy and tactics. Like the WP/VP the NAP too chose the urban poor as the main target group. In addition to its *Ülkü Ocakları*, which is its main local organisations and well spread in the neighbourhoods, it set up neighbourhood bureaus coordinated with the *Ülkü Ocakları*. In these bureaus they mainly recruited poor, disadvantaged, unemployed, and excluded young people. They some times fined jobs to them or after indoctrinating with its ideology they run very active election campaign. In fact according to Özbudun (2000, p. 81) in terms of "membership participation in party activities- other than voting- was found to be highest in the two strongly nationalistic parties, the NAP and the PDP..." As Özbudun observed before the elections in 1999 the NAP's members were very active in participating the local party campaigning. Similar to the WP/VP the NAP organised some small scale welfare services in the areas such as collecting from wealthier ANP supporters individuals, business, shopkeepers or from those municipalities that hold by NAP to distribute in the poor *gecekondü* areas.

It has been argued that the young generation who was born after the coup (in 1980) has played a crucial role in the NAP's election success of doubling its share of vote in 1999 elections before the last election the government changed election law and lowered voting age from 20 to 18. It meant an increase of 2.5 million new, young electorates and half of which, it is believed, and this number voted fro the NAP. (İşleyen, E 1999). The NAP has been building up its support in many different levels, but in the last five years it came to be characterised as the party of young those who born after the military coup of 1980 and have no idea about the NAP's extreme right violent past. It appeals to this group because they disillusioned with the existing centre-right and left parties. Demographically, Turkey has a very young population but it seems majority of mainstream parties has not been paying enough attention to this fact as much as the NAP has been doing.

One of the most important variables that affected the rise of the NAP was the escalation of the Kurdish uprising in the Southeast Turkey. The rise of Kurdish nationalism and intensification of fight between the security forces and the PKK has led to a rise of nationalist feelings among many ordinary Turks especially the young

less educated, unemployed and excluded youth in the gecekondu as well as in the small town in central Anatolia regions. The NAP has been building its support among the young people because they are the party that invaded the football stadiums with their nationalistic slogans, especially with an anti Kurdish rhetoric. As mentioned above the war in the southeast led to death of more than thirty thousand civilians including 501 children, 512 women, 3,489 army members mainly young soldiers, 180 police man and 1144 mainly Kurdish village guards.¹⁹³ Throughout the 1990s the NAP developed a strategy of turning every death in to a political stage. By being there sharing the grievances, walking with the funeral processions, shouting slogans like “the martyrs does not die, the country wont be split” and anti-PKK slogans the NAP turned its image to party of carers of the martyrs that sacrificed their life for the country and for their families. (See Pular, H 1999)

Finally it can be said that in this climax of heightened wave of nationalism and patriotism and the capture of the leader of the PKK just two months before the elections gave an enormous momentum for both nationalistic parties the NAP and DLP. It would of course be a mistake to argue that the electoral success of the ANP was due purely to on its nationalistic policies and anti-PKK stands but as mentioned there were other important socio-economic and political issues like fight against corruption and poverty that party advocated in its election campaign.

In the mean time the social democrat RPP, like many in Western Europe, lost belief in its core ideology of freedom, equality and social justice and failed to put forward an alternative ideology against the rising new right, but rather became a bad imitation of it. Consequently it has lost its traditional working class support. In turn the Islamist VP will continue to enjoy the support of the urban poor. In fact the mass support that the WP/VP attracts can in many ways be classified as a squatter movement unique in its mobilisation strategies under the VP's flag.

¹⁹³ Radical (Istanbul daily) 1999, “Here is the bloody bill”, 17 February 1999.

CHAPTER FIVE

EXPLAINING THE MEANING OF PARTY MEMBERSHIP: ROUTES TO AND REASONS FOR PARTY MEMBERSHIP

"A certain number of recent sociological studies (Ferry and Renaut, 1987; Piotte, 1987; Melucci, 1989; Ion, 1990) have focused on a phenomenon previously overlooked by researchers: namely, what individuals gain from their involvement in collective action, what motivates them, their need for self-assertion and a recognition of their difference. In other words, these recent studies emphasise that in order to grasp the scope or meaning of social movements, researchers must take into account the ways in which individuals become involved, the concerns that motivates their involvement, and what they as individuals derive from their participation in a collective project" (Hamel, Pierre 1995, p. 236).

5.1 Introduction

Party members, argued Whiteley, (1995, pp. 211-233) are a distinct group of people who by joining a party participate in politics far more than ordinary citizens. Consequently, these members are an ideal group to use for examining high-cost types of political participation. The literature concerning political participation shows that most of the research in this area is devoted to the basic type of political participation, i.e. the voting participation, and such studies examine voters and their attitudes. Interestingly party members, especially party activists, have not been studied at all.

Many scholars have commented on the lack of attention and suggested an urgent need for more comprehensive research on party activists. As most studies are directed at voters and party members the most important participants, party activists, are neglected. The question of why some party members choose to become political activists while others do very little remains unanswered.¹⁹⁴

There are different theories to explain citizens' involvement in politics. These theories run from rational self-interested individuals to class action; from resource

¹⁹⁴ See Verba, Schlozman, Brady and Nie 1993, p.310; Leighley, 1995, pp.181-209; Whiteley, 1995.

mobilisation theory to opportunity structure theories; from psychological, individual needs to a function of an individual's social position etc. However in my study I prefer to use the standard model developed by Verba and Nie (1972) and used by many students of politics. They argued that:

The individual's decision to participate and how to participate depends on his social circumstances -the set of social characteristics that defines his "life space," where he lives, what he does for living, his education, his race, and so forth. These social circumstances generate sets of attitudes conducive to or inhibitor of political participation. How and how much he participates will also be affected by the institutional structures within which he finds himself. All of these forces lead him to a decision to participate or not... (Verba and Nie, 1972:19).

An important aspect of understanding why people join a political party is to examine the actual mechanics of how they join in the first place.¹⁹⁵ The way in which an individual joins a party, association or an interest group tells a lot about both sides: the individual's intention, level of commitment, expertise, social environment, motives, aspirations and the resources that he/she might possess. The same is relevant for the organisation itself.

This process unfolds the structure and the working principles of an organisation; such as whether the organisation is open to everyone or if there are any restriction or conditions, whether it actively recruits new members or takes a passive attitude. This process spells out whether the party is resourceful, outgoing, reaching out to ordinary people at the grassroots level and actively engaged in recruiting or not. What are the patterns of membership and why did members join the VP in the first place? By doing this I intend to learn more about the driving forces behind joining the party and then becoming a political activist.

In chapter 2, I concentrated on the decline of the political party system in Turkey. It was observed that apart from the WP/VP, mainstream political parties have experienced widespread fragmentation, electoral volatility and organisational decline. Due to its nationwide, well-organised grassroots organisations and highly committed party activists, the WP/VP escaped this trend. As noted in chapter 2, grassroots organisations have played a key role in the WP's rise to power. In this chapter I aim

¹⁹⁵ Whiteley, Seyd and Richardson (1994, p. 77).

to find out how party activists got involved the party and their patterns of participation. In other words it is the aim of this chapter to find out how and why the VP's members joined the party in the first place and than to find out the main socio-economic condition of it. To do this I examine data collected in the field to discern patterns such as activists' perception of their activities, how they describe themselves and their current position within the local grassroots organisations?

5.1.2 Who Are They: The Current Status of Members

When asked, the majority (79 percent) of my informants described their role within the Virtue Party as grassroots activist or active VP members in the first instance. As we see from the following figures, the majority of them are leaders and representatives of neighbourhood executive committees.¹⁹⁶ One third of them (9 of these 33 activists) said in addition to their duties in the neighbourhood executive committee, they have either membership or office in the VP's sub-district (İlçe) organisation as well.

Table 5.1 How would you describe your relation with the VP?

TYPE OF PARTICIPATION	FREQUENCY OF OCCURRENCE	(%) PERCENT
A sympathiser/supporter of the Virtue Party	-	-
A voter of the VP	-	-
An active member of the VP (grassroots activist)	33	79
Activists who also hold an office membership in sub-district committee. *	6	14
Other (activists, party workers: branch administrator etc.,)	3	7
Total	42	100

Source: Fieldwork in Mamak and Keçiören -Ankara

- The fourth and fifth rows overlap each other. Some of these grassroots activists also hold an office or membership in ilçes excutive committee therefore the total number and percentage is more than it should be.

The second group (14 percent) of my informants consists of those who put their membership in the VP's ilçe (sub-district) committees before their position in their neighbourhoods. This division indicates an upward mobility within the party organisation at the local level and a high expectation and desire among grassroots activists for higher positions in the party organisation. Some of neighbourhood

¹⁹⁶ See Appendix II

representatives are also members of the executive committee of sub-district branch. Those who put their role in ilçe (sub-district) as office holding or member of ilçe executive committee before their duty and role in the neighbourhood organisations showed a strong desire for upward mobility and high expectation to climb up the carrier ladder in politics. There are studies that indicated careerist expectations as one of the motives for political participation and becoming a political activist. I return to this point later for analysis but for now just indicate this as a possible explanation among various others.

Only 7 percent of them said they were activists without any office or membership of any committee. Some of them were also party workers e.g. branch administrator or data processors. This group were also active. They are not just professionals in their areas they are full members of the VP and do actively work wherever possible.

Table: 5.2 What is your present position within the VP's local organisation?

POSITION	FREQUENCY OF OCCURRENCE	(%) PERCENT
Neighbourhood Representative (leader of the Nbh. Committee)	17	40
Member of Neighbourhood executive committee	6	14
Member of sub-district Executive committee	4	10
Active member with no office or committee membership	4	10
Member of Youth Committee	5	12
Other (party inspector, worker etc.,)	6	14
Total	42	100

Source: Fieldwork in Mamak and Keçiören -Ankara

I asked them their actual positions in the party organisation. I wanted to see whether they held any elected office, positions or membership in any particular committee, or whether they were just party activists with no elected office or membership. It appears that the majority (55 percent) of my informants are either members of neighbourhood or *ilçe* (sub-district) executive committees. Some 41 percent of them are representatives of neighbourhood executive committees. They are the chairmen of the party organisation in that particular neighbourhood and they are directly accountable to the party's *ilçe* branch. They normally chair the weekly meetings with the members of the executive committee if there is no one from the *ilçe* party organisation. Some

14 percent of them are members of executive committees in their neighbourhoods. The neighbourhood executive committees consist of 14 members and they have a clear-cut division of labour amongst them. Some of these specific tasks that are done by the members are for example PR (Public Relations), chairmen of the electoral affairs, chairmen of the education and propaganda, chairmen of financial affairs and the like. These members are responsible for carrying out their daily tasks in co-operation with the rest of the executive committee.

There is a systematic and efficient division of labour in the VP's local neighbourhood organisations. In terms of organisational structure the neighbourhood organisations are too highly developed and specialised to function as a mass political party. Another aspect of this organisation is the sense of accountability within the party hierarchy. In a sense all VP party organisations are accountable from the smallest neighbourhood organisation to the sub-district from district to the national centre of the party. One fifth of my informants are currently members of the executive committee in *ilçe*. This is a clear sign of upward mobility within the party organisation and very important for those activists. All of the members of the *ilçe* executive committees are also members of neighbourhood executive committees. In most case they are natural chairmen of these neighbourhood organisations, but they would like to be seen as members of an upper level organisation in the first place. There is a vibrant organic relationship between the neighbourhoods and the *ilçe* party organisations.

Another one fifth of the activists hold neither elected office nor any membership but this does not mean that these members are less active or committed. They are very active and dedicated to their party. In fact being free from all administrative duties and paperwork required in the local branches, these activists can spend more time on canvassing, leaflet distribution, fund raising or meeting the people in the neighbourhood. Twelve percent of my informants stated their current position as being a member of the Youth Committee. Several commentators of Turkish politics have noticed that the youth and ladies' committees were the real assets of the Welfare Party (Ayata, 1997, p.52 and Çakır, 1994). In terms of political mobilisation, the pro-Islamic Welfare Party and later its successor the Virtue Party is the only political party in Turkey which has successfully integrated women into its party organisation. Often in poor *gecekondu* (slums) neighbourhoods' veiled women from every age

group young, middle aged or old go door-to-door canvas votes while the men are working. They use interesting and clever tactics and strategies: a mixture of religion, e.g. reading verses, citing from the Koran, poetry from Islamist poets and political propaganda that often comes in an indirect, implicit way in their house meetings.

The youth commission, however, has a much more direct approach. The youth commission has a division of labour, which is a mirror image of the neighbourhood executive committee. Their tasks are more diverse and more demanding in some ways. Their tasks vary from organising sporting activities, and support facilities for the young often unemployed people, to fundraising and organising charities to collect money, food, cloth, shoes, coal and wood for heating, medicine and the like to give the poor, elderly, handicapped, orphans or widows in their neighbourhoods. The youth committee holds out seminars to educate those who feel close to the VP. These seminars are designed to indoctrinate newcomers and pursue those who have not formally joined. The majority of the youth group are educated; most of them are at least high school graduates. Most of these high school graduates went to the religious *İmam-Hatip Lises* (prayer-leaders and preachers high schools) and some have university degrees.

During the election campaigns they usually carry out activities that require more muscle than brain. They put flags, posters and leaflets all around the *ilçe* (sub-district). They do it late into the night. While I was in Ankara for my fieldwork, I witnessed them putting posters on all available walls in their neighbourhoods, hanging hundreds of plastic party flags between the electricity pylons and high buildings; and between balconies. Even the mosque minarets could not escape from this flagging-fever.

The *Gençlik Komisyonu* (Commission of youth) is an independent group with its own division of labour, but during the election campaign they seemed to subordinate themselves, their youthful energy and enthusiasm to the neighbourhood executive committee. During this time their physical strength, and dynamism becomes crucial for the party's local election campaign.

The last category in my informant group is classified as the others, consists of 14 percent of my sample. These activists are not member of any committees, or holding offices but they have important duties within the local party organisations. Some of them are party workers working fulltime professionals for the party, but should not be confused with the professionals who organise the party campaigning or professional party workers in other larger parties. Despite professional status they are no less active or less committed to the VP. Usually, they are from the traditionally religious, conservative regions and are raised from an early age within the Islamist groups such as *Milli Gençlik Vakfı* (MGV) (Foundation of the National Youth), which has been known as the school of the party since the early 1970s. This group includes the party inspectors whose duties are to inspect all sorts of party activities on the ground and report to the ilçe. They are party activists obviously with a special task to make sure that every unit; every individual does their bit in the service of the party. There are *müşahit* (teachers) and *başmüşahit* (head teachers) who educate the party members on various issues from how to watch the ballot box on election days, to how to talk to or approach people in their neighbourhoods. There are administrators, secretaries, and other clerical staff whose work is crucial for the party as well.

5.2 Routes To Membership

5.2.1 Regional Disparity and Party Preferences

There are several dynamics involved in the process of party membership. It could be a rational choice for an individual seeking material benefit from his/her engagement with the party. It could be altruistic, emotional or expressive attachments that drive one to join a particular party or being drawn by the social norms or collective incentives (see Whiteley et al 1994, pp.77-89). There are many of theories concerned with the reasons for political involvement: resource mobilisation theory, collective action theory, Standard Socio-economic Status Model general incentive model and others. The majority of my informants were born outside Ankara (See chapter 6) in this context it is worthwhile seeing if there is any regional pattern or any significant relationship between regions and party membership

The first pattern that emerged is that the majority of my informants come from less developed regions. More than three quarters (76 percent) of my informants were born elsewhere and migrated to Ankara at an early age. The majority of them were born in the poorest Black Sea and Eastern Anatolia regions, historically strongholds of the pro-Islamic NSP and later the WP/VP. There is a close correlation between the index of regional development and party preferences. Therefore I suggest that people from the poorest regions in Turkey not only tend to vote for the WP/VP but also are more inclined to become party activists compared to other provinces.

In general, the problem of underdevelopment leads to greater diversity between different regions. Since the early nineteenth century great regional diversity has been one of the persisting characteristics of Turkey. Perhaps one of the most obvious reasons for this historical phenomenon is the 'dependent economic development' that started with the penetration of Western industrial goods into the Ottoman market.¹⁹⁷ From the early nineteenth century the process of modernisation and economic development started from the western and coastal regions, i.e. Istanbul, Izmir and Bursa.¹⁹⁸ Since then the Central and Eastern regions have been lagging far behind the developed western regions.

In 1967 a study by the Turkish State Planning Organization showed that the most highly developed Marmara region had an index value of 145 on a composite index of socio-economic development, while the least developed eastern region had an index value of only 65. Almost twice as great a proportion of the active population is employed in industrial and service sectors in the Marmara region as in the eastern region. (Özbudun, 1976, p. 97).

From an electoral perspective the regional divisions have been one of the important aspects of political life in Turkey. The studies of electoral support for political parties have indicated a direct and clear connection between the level of regional socio-economic development and party support. Turkish scholars from the 1960s noticed the connection between the regional diversity and party support as well.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁷ See for example, Keyder, Ç, 1987:25-48.

¹⁹⁸ See Özbudun, E 1976: 97.

¹⁹⁹ See, for example, Özbudun E 1976: 104

There is a long established pattern of regional differences and voting behaviour. For example in the elections of 1973 the National Salvation Party (NSP) gained much of its electoral support from underdeveloped and semi-developed districts. Its share of vote in the developed regions was below the national average.

Table: 5.3 The distribution of votes according to rate of regional development and party support in the 1973 election.

CATEGORY OF DISTRICT	RPP	JP	NSP	DP	RRP	OTHERS *
Developed	38.6	32.3	8.4	10.3	3.8	6.6
Semi-developed	30.5	32.1	13.7	13.6	5.5	4.6
Underdeveloped	27.5	23.4	15.4	12.8	7.4	13.5

Source: Şen, 1995, p.20.

- RPP: Republican People's Party, JP: Justice Party, NSP: National Salvation Party, DP: Democratic Party, RRP: Republican Reliance Party, and Others: other smaller parties such as Worker Party of Turkey (the TIP).

This trend seems to have continued during the 1980s and 1990s. It appears that regional diversity is also influential in terms of party membership. The results of my field survey shows that the majority of the VP's activists come from the poorest regions in the country.

Turkey is geographically divided into seven regions. Not all the regions have a clear or consistent electoral trend but the region of central Anatolia has been known for its traditional conservative attitude since the 1940s. Historically speaking during the Ottoman times this region was on the sectarian fault line between the Turkmen-Alevi and Kurdish East and Sunni-Turkish/Ottoman western regions. (See Mardin, Ş, 1991, p.90). As it was a buffer zone religious *ulama* (religious clerical class) in these regions, with the backing of the central authority in Istanbul, assumed the role of guardians of the *din ve devlet* (religion and the state) against the Alevi Turkmen population. Mardin argued that in line with the state's fear of the spread of Shiism in the Eastern regions, the guardians of the local Sunni *ulema* saw Alevism as a deviation that had to be exterminated. Especially in Sunni communities in the Eastern districts between the Kızılırmak River and Erzurum people were indoctrinated and set

against the Alevis by the Sunni religious leaders (Ibid, p.90). In addition this region has also been experiencing one of the highest rates of migration to urban centres.

It seems that throughout the 1980s and 1990s the Islamic movement made considerable political gains in central Anatolian towns such as Yozgat, Çankırı, and Çorum. Parallel to this process the WP became the most popular party of the *gecekondus*. The increasing popularity of the Islamic WP/VP in poverty stricken *gecekondu* areas relates to the same dynamics as apply in the less developed regions.

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It is not surprising, therefore, that three quarters (76 percent) of my informants came from four provinces: Yozgat, Çankırı, Çorum and Ankara. Three of those towns were among the 20 provinces where the WP had the highest share of the total votes in 1991.²⁰¹ In the general elections of 1991 the WP received 39.5 percent of the votes in Yozgat, 29.2 percent in Çankırı and 27.9 percent in Çorum (Çakır, 1994, pp.216-226). From my survey data it appears that more than a quarter (26.19 percent) of my informants were born in Yozgat. They later migrated to Ankara. 12 percent of my informants came from Çankırı. With a similar number from Çorum another town that was at the centre of sectarian divide between Sunnis and Alevis. At the regional level this sectarian division determines the political cleavages. The second largest informant group (24 percent) was born either in Ankara centre or in Ankara's sub-districts. The rest of my informant group, with the exception of two activists who were born in Western towns, were mainly born in two Eastern regions. These are Eastern Anatolia and the Eastern Black Sea regions. One fifth of my informants were born in Erzurum, Malatya and Gümüşhane in the Eastern Anatolia Region. Some 7 percent were born in Girasun, Rize and Trabzon in the Eastern Black sea region. These regions are predominantly Sunni Muslim but ethnically the Eastern Black sea Region differs from the Eastern Anatolia Region. Although the ethnic make up of these regions are different, both are at the bottom end of the regional development scale. Economically and socially both regions share the same fate of economic and

²⁰⁰ The biggest reflection of the gap between the regions might be the direction of migration dependant on social and economical development. Since the 1950s, there are certain regions and provinces which have been experiencing out-migration well above the national average such as Ağrı, Amasya, Bingöl, Çorum, Kars, Malatya, Mardin, Muş, Niğde, Ordu, Sinop, Tokat, Tunceli and Yozgat. These cities are mainly situated in the Eastern regions with a high proportion of rural population, high birth rate and low level of agricultural income. (See, Peker, 1996, Chapter 1).

²⁰¹ See Çakır, R 1994: 218.

social backwardness: a low level of industrialisation, low level of schooling, high illiteracy rate (especially among women); high birth rate and infant mortality; and a high rate of out-flow migration.

It has been pointed out by many students of politics that one of the most important variables in terms of political participation, voting behaviour and party preferences is socio-economic conditions. The socio-economic status model was fully developed by Sidney and Nie (1972). It was argued that those citizens who occupy higher social and economic status participate more than the average citizen occupying lower social status. Similar arguments are made by Barnes and Kaase 1979; Milbarth, 1977; Parry, Moyeser and Day 1992; Dalton, 1988 and Dowse and Hughes, 1986. As citizens identified themselves as belonging to a certain group or social class they voted for parties which explicitly stood for their interests (Hague et al, 1998, p.106).

What can we make all of this? It is obvious that there has been a clear connection between the index of socio-economic development and support for political parties at the regional level. As observed, the majority of VP activists migrated to Ankara from the less developed Central, Eastern Anatolia and Black Sea regions. Since the early 1970s the Islamist parties from the NSP to VP have been the party of the petit bourgeoisie, traditional small merchants, tradesmen, artisans, shopkeepers and the poor peasantry in these less developed regions (Yücekök, 1997, pp.40-51). From mid 1980s the WP expanded its social bases among the urban poor (See chapter 4).

The core of the WP/VP support has been the mass of wage and salary earners, traditional small artisans, merchants, tradesman and shopkeepers as well as lower and middle classes who have lost out under neoliberal economic policies implemented since the 1980s.²⁰² The WP made considerable election gains from mainly gecekondu areas of the big urban centres.²⁰³ As argued in Chapter 4, from the late 1980s the WP/VP assumed the role of the social democrat parties in these run down areas where

²⁰² For a detailed account of the neoliberal economy policies and impact of the restructuring program on the lower and middle lower classes see Chapter 4.

²⁰³ According to the latest estimates in 1995 there were two million gecekondu housing units with ten million inhabitants. All together thirty five (35) percent of the urban population is living in the gecekondu areas (Kongar, 2000, p. 566).

it runs support networks for newcomer gecekondu dwellers. Its grassroots organisations have very effectively mobilised the gecekondu population.

5.2.2 How Did They Become Members?

I asked questions about the recruitment procedure: whether the party recruited them or if they decided by themselves and approached the party. If you go back to the date that you joined the party, did you approach the party or did the party approach you?

Table: 5.4 How did the activists become members of the party

THE FACTOR	FREQUENCY OF OCCURRENCE	(% PERCENT
I thought and decided by myself	16	39
Party approached via a friend of mine	11	26
Someone from my family/ relatives asked me to join	9	21
Loyalty / admiration for the party leader	6	14
Total	42	100

Source: Same as above

The process of membership is one of the less studied but more important aspects of political participation. The way an individual joins a party, association or an interest group tells a lot about the individual's intentions, level of commitment, expertise and the resources that he/she might possess. The same is relevant for the organisation itself. This process would indicate if the party was resourceful, outgoing, actively engaging in recruitment or not.

Table 5.4 show that two fifths (39 percent) of my informants can be classified as 'self-starters' which means they themselves thought carefully and decided to join the party. To become member of a political party as a 'self-starter' is a very important indicator of the emotional and ideological commitment of the specific individual. According to the 'general incentive model' that I am using, 'self-starters' can be classified as activists who have a high degree of expressive motive to participate (See Whiteley, 1995, pp. 223). Self-starters may well be the cream of the party activists because of their high level of ideological conviction and passion for the party. The second most

numerous groups are those who were recruited by the party. Some 26 percent of them told me that they were approached by the party to join which shows a considerable success for the party's ability to recruit new members, especially in the case of party activists. Although in the first instance this figure may seem to be low we should not forget that this group are political activists, and the very nature of political activism can contradict the idea of being recruited rather than being a recruiter. In other words they mostly tend to be self-starters. Among this group some said the party approached them via a friend and this fact is confirmed by my observations in the field.

The VP uses various strategies and tactics in terms of recruiting new members or for vote canvassing. They are always keen to approach in an informal, friendly way usually by using friends, traditional family networks, kin relations, or *hemşehri* associations.²⁰⁴ More than one quarter (26 percent) of activists reported that they were approached by the party via a friend. This indicates at least two different dynamics at the local level. One of them is a very well organised, militant like, hard working, and very active local party organisation that can recruit new members. Studies show that citizens contacted personally are more likely to vote and to be interested in the gladiatorial activities.²⁰⁵ The second dynamic is that the effect of the social environment and informal or small social groups such as family, friends, etc., for instance some of those who join the party did so because they were asked or persuaded by their friends. It seems that the effect of friendship at the local level was important for my informants.

However one must be careful not to underestimate the capacity of the party organisation in terms of recruitment. They were approached by a friend but as I indicated above the VP is a true master of public relations and has its own tactics of how to contact people on the ground. Approaching through friends relatives, or a *hemşehri* (someone from the same town) is a well practised method of contacting or recruiting new people. This means that a friend may play a role in someone's

²⁰⁴ The word *hemşehrilik* describes a presumed tie existing between people from the same village, town or province (Kalaycıoğlu, 1998, p. 18). The *hemşehri* networks have been one of the widespread forms of solidarity among newly migrated families in the metropolitan areas. It was developed as one of the informal coping strategy among the migrants from the same regions. It has been studied by many Turkish social scientists most noticeably See Ayata-Güneş 1991; 1994: 326; Schüler, 1998; Şenyapılı, 1978; Tekeli, 1982.

²⁰⁵ See Milbarth and Goel, 1972, p.136.

recruitment but the whole credit should not go to the friend because the friend was mobilised by the local party branch in the first place. Having said that, I do not suggest that friends or families are ineffective but rather the primary reason in this case was different. In fact when both party affiliation and family membership are combined the result is more visible.

It must be acknowledged that the WP/VP have been successfully tapping into the existing traditional, religious and cultural resources. From the early days of its establishment the WP and then the VP creatively made use of traditional religious networks, relationships, associations, groups and cultural resources. They also utilised the traditional solidarity organizations that have been around for centuries. They also innovatively reconfigured the old, traditional political culture especially in relation to religious issues, social justice and equality, e.g. the rhetoric of *Adil Düzen* (Just Society) with a greater emphasis on Islamic brotherhood and the like. Also, the WP/VP, in its political campaigning, used a certain type of language and phrasing with which most people identify. The glorification of the Ottoman era as the 'golden past' have been one of the strongest aspects of the WP/VP's party activism on the ground.

The third group, which make up 21 percent of the activists, said someone from their family or relatives had played a leading role in their involvement with the party. Like many things in our lives politics and political attitudes are learned from an early age. This process is called political socialisation. According to Cord et al (1974, p.184) political socialisation is:

... the process by which the individuals in a given social system learn their values, norms, concepts and attitudes about both the political and the individual's relationship to the political system... In the broadest sense, political socialisation is the way in which a society perpetuates its political culture. It is a continuous, lifelong process, which is part of each individual's conditioning and education as much as of the culture he is born into.

In this process the individual learns from family; father, mother brother/sister and other relatives about all aspects of politics. In later life he/she may retain these ideas as most people do. Studies have shown that even long after we have left home, the influence of our parents continues to affect many aspects of our behaviour. For example most people vote as their parents did. The family is the most influential

factor in a person's political behaviour because it controls the early years crucial to the development of the personality of an individual, between three and thirteen (Cord et al 1974, p.185; See also Dawson and Prewitt, 1969, pp. 5-6).

It appears that my findings confirm the large body of literature in this area which shows that those who are raised in a family which has an active tradition of involvement in political parties, social movements, or other sorts of interest groups, very likely to inherit the family norms of participation and their political persuasion will be affected by 'family tradition'.²⁰⁶

This emotional attachment and loyalty to the primary groups can be assessed as what Whiteley (1995, p.223) called the influence of 'significant others'. He argued that 'party activists are motivated by the perception of social norms, the opinion of "significant others" or people whose opinions they respect and value' (1995, p. 223). People develop very deep emotional ties and long lasting loyalties and a sense of belonging towards primary groups such as family, peer groups and small, close communities. The role of the family is extremely important in the process of political orientation. It is a key agent through which the political culture is transmitted from one generation to the next (ibid: 107). Table 5.4 shows that for 21 percent of my informants' membership happened through the family.

The last group is those who joined the party because of their loyalty and admiration for the party leader. Some fourteen percent of them joined the party because they felt loyalty and admiration for the leader. This is confirmed by my observations too. The loyalty and admiration towards the founding father of the Islamist movement Necmettin Erbakan was explicit among all party members, supporters or activists. He is a well known, respected and admired leader among VP supporters, voters, activists or MPs; young or old, men or women.

Throughout his thirty-year political career he has enjoyed high popularity and undisputed leadership among his party from rank-and-file members to the MPs in parliament. However he was effectively banned from politics by the Supreme Court in

²⁰⁶ Seyd and Whiteley, 1992, p. 65; see also Butler and Stokes, 1974.

1998, which is another source of sympathy towards him because in the eye of his people he has been victimised, his political rights being denied by the authorities.

If we go back to the role of the family as a formal learning ground and its effects on political choices we have got more than enough evidence to confirm that family has a great impact on an individual's political choice. This is true also for my informant group. Four in five of my informant group said that they have someone in their family who at least votes for WP/VP if not a member.

5.2.3 Family and Party Membership

“Among all of the influences acting on partisan identification, the family is the strongest.”
(Crotty and Jacobson 1980, p. 26).

The vast majority (79 percent) of the VP's activists have another member of family who is, one way or another, involved: either a member or even party activist in some cases, supporter or voter of the party with the Virtue Party (see table 5.5). In the context of family and political preferences the above table clearly indicates the significance of family on the individual's political choice.

Table: 5. 5 Apart from you, is there anyone in your family or close kin who is also a member, supporter or voter of the WP/VP?

Answers	Frequency of Occurrence	percent (%)
Yes there is someone	33	79
Who are they?		
Parents	8	19
Wife	8	19
Children	6	14
Brother /Sister	3	7
Uncle/Aunt	2	5
Part of Family	4	10
Whole Family	11	26
No there is no one	9	21
Total	42	100

Source: Fieldwork in Mamak and Keçiören -Ankara

What is more interesting and significant in terms of the role of family and political participation is that within this group 26 percent of them said their whole family are members, supporters or at least vote for the VP. In this context the term 'whole

family' consists of extended nuclear family parents, brother and sisters, children if they are over eighteen and uncles, aunts and cousins. Sometimes it can be interpreted as a clan like family, which especially in less developed rural regions tends to live together under an elder leader. These traditional large families, support political patronage- the traditional form of political participation.

Whether it is the traditional large or extended nuclear family, family ties are much stronger in Turkey than in the rest of Europe. For this reason it is very common to observe that party support runs through families and members usually remain loyal to their families and parties. Supporting the same party expresses loyalty to the family as well. It can be argued that the involvement of whole families in addition to the activist is a significant indicator of the social base of political activism. It might be one of the prime conditions for political involvement and becoming a political activist in a party.

The influence of the family, especially the parents on the individual's political behaviour is also apparent from the high rate of parents who are also involved with the WP/VP. One in five (19 percent) of my informants gave their parents as the other family member who was also member, supporter or voter of the party. If we recall the above discussion on the effect of the family as the most influential agent of political socialisation the parent's role is significant. From the data it is clear that family and the parents in this case played a very significant role on political orientation of this specific group (20 % of informants indicating parental support for WP/VP). This role is more important because becoming a political activist goes far beyond merely voting, supporting or even becoming a member. Those members influenced by their families, primarily by parents in turn influenced and persuaded their spouses to support the VP. A considerable percentage of them, one in five (19 percent) said their spouses, in most cases wives, are also members or supporters of the WP/VP.

Contrary to the role of family or parents the involvement of wives can be interpreted as the influence and indoctrination of the activists on the spouses rather than being influenced by the parents or family. At the same time we notice that existing studies of female political participation in Turkey have shown that there has been an

evolutionary process from dependent voting towards independent female participation and voting behaviour.²⁰⁷

Fourteen percent of informants said their children were also involved with the party. Ten percent of them said part of their family supports; votes for or are members of the VP. The involvement of the children can be another sign of the influence of parents and family on the political socialisation process. Maybe fourteen percent does not seem much but we must remember that in Turkey the voting age was 20 and only recently (in 1998) went down to 18 and political party membership also requires an age limit of at least 18 and above. So 14 percent may look insignificant but it may be due to the age of children as well. Nevertheless it is important to show the extent to which political activism takes place within a family context. Finally seven (7) percent of them said their sisters or brothers and four (4) percent said their uncles or aunts are also involved with the same party.

My empirical findings show that there are two related forces at work. First the family as the most significant agent of political socialisation has influenced the WP/VP's grassroots activists and played an important role in moving them from merely voting for the VP to becoming activists for it. Second grassroots activists are active within their families as well. That they do not leave their role as political activist at the front door but rather take it in and talk about politics in general and express the ideology, party policies and propaganda to the other members of the family. So they persuade, recruit and mobilise members of their own families. As one activist told me "if the leader of the family chooses a path the rest will naturally follow him."

The second group consisting of 21 percent of informants said they have no one in their family who are members, supporters or voters of the VP. My data shows that instead of being introduced by someone from the family this group joined the party in

²⁰⁷ For an analysis of female voting in Turkey see Burçak Keskin, 1997, "Political Participation Patterns of Turkish Women" Middle East Review of International Affairs (MERIA) MERIA Journal, December 1997, Vol. 1 No 4. The article is available on the web: <http://www.biu.ac.il/SOC/besa/meria/journal/1997/issue4/jv1n4a5.html>. Also readers may consult the following material: Arat, Y, 1984, "Patriarchal Paradox: Women in Politics in Turkey," Associated University Press. Dülger, İlhan, 1987, "Turkiye'de Şehirde Yasayan Kadının Siyasi Haklarını Kullanma Eğilimleri," DPT, Ankara, 1987. -Koker, L 1990 "Modernleşme, Kemalizm ve Demokrasi," İletişim Yayınları, İstanbul, Koray, M, 1995, "Turkiye'de Kadın," Türkiye Sosyal Ekonomik Araştırmalar Vakfı, 1995. Tekeli, S, 1991, "Women In Modern Turkish Society," Zed Books Ltd, London.

other ways. Among this group six (out of nine in total) of them joined the WP/VP as 'self starters', the party and friends approached 2 of them and one of them joined the party for the loyalty and admiration of the party leader. Because majority of it joined the party as 'self starters' this group compared to the other grassroots activists may have much clearer and better ideas about party principles, policies and a greater ideological understanding and stronger commitment towards party. In the next section I discuss how my informants assess their own role as grassroots activists in relation to the electoral outcomes.

5.2.4 Political Efficacy and Party Membership

Seyd and Whiteley (1995, pp. 219-220) pointed out that if the individual believes that his/her participation will be for the collective good then there is a greater chance that he/she will participate. It was observed, during my field research, that grassroots activists are influential on both sides: within the local community as well as rallying for local needs, problems and demands at the sub-district level. I asked: If you were asked to scale the significance of grassroots activism upon the party's performance on a scale how would you scale it?

Table: 5.6 Effect of grassroots activism

DEGREE OF IMPORTANCE	FREQUENCY OF OCCURRENCE	(%) PER-CENT
Very Important	33	74
Important	8	19
Not so Important	1	02
Insignificant	-	-
Other	2	05
Total	42	100

Source: Same as above

As Table 5.6 indicates three quarters of VP grassroots activists believe their political activism is 'very important for the party's election results'. While one in five of them believe it is 'important'. This means that the vast majority of activists highly value their participation and strongly believe it will make a change if they participate in the way they do. Following Seyd and Whiteley's (1995) logic it can be argued that my informants joined the party and chose to become political activists because they

strongly believe that their grassroots activities are 'very important' to the electoral performance of the VP. I will discuss this point further in chapter 7.

5.3 Reasons For Membership

When asked the most important reason for becoming members, informants' answers vary from religious grounds to ideological reasons, from national and sacred values to WP/VP's specific economic policy of a 'just order', or as a reaction to other parties. The literature review also suggests that the discourse of political participation is a contentious issue among students of politics.

Table: 5.7 the most important reason for membership

REASONS FOR JOINING THE WP/VP	FREQUENCY OF OCCURRENCES	(%) PERCENTAGE
Religious reasons, because it is an Islamist party.	17	40
Ideological closeness / The WP/VP respects and protects the national and sacred values.	9	21
Only the WP/VP can solve the socio-economic problems and best for the country.	6	14
Other reasons: trustworthiness/ cleanness, loyalty to leadership, Protecting the poor, etc.,	7	17
As a reaction to other parties.	3	7
Total	42	100

Source: Same as above

Since my research focused on the grassroots activism of the WP/VP I had to grasp the initial motivation of the members for joining the party. So I designed an open-ended question in my questionnaire to gauge the motives for membership. The choice of an open-ended question was a deliberate attempt not to restrict or lead informants to pre-coded categories. Hence the informant felt free to express the most important reasons for joining the party. Can you tell me what was the most important reason for you to become a member of the VP?

Without delving into theoretical debates, I describe what my informants said about the process of becoming a member and getting involved with the WP/VP. The stated

reasons vary but it can be collected under these headings: religious, ideological, capability of solving the socio-economic problems, reaction to other political parties and other reasons which are trustworthiness, loyalty to the leadership, protecting the rights of the weak and poor people.

5.3.1 Religious Reasons

It is an established fact that the WP and its predecessor the VP have been described as the religiously oriented or pro-Islamist party and this fact, it seems, played a very significant role on the process of membership.²⁰⁸ More than forty percent of the grassroots activists joined the WP/VP for religious reasons (see table 5.7). In other words they were drawn to the WP/VP as an Islamist party. For this reason, I consult the interviews in order to provide a more coherent and clear reasoning that aroused the religious motives.

Through the interviews, I examine the issues, priorities, problems and reasons that respondents expressed for joining the Virtue (Fazilet) party. Throughout my fieldwork I talked to many political activists about why they joined the VP. One of them was Süha Çelik. He is the member of the administrative committee of the VP in Keçiören Sub-district. He owns a furniture shop in Siteler, a large industrial estate where the major furniture production and trade is based. I asked him the most important reason for joining the VP.

Because of my beliefs and my attachment to the Refah (Welfare) party in the past I have chosen this [VP] party. Also, the VP is the closest party to my beliefs, worldviews and my race and I believe only the VP would back me in this manner." "I joined the VP because we (my friends and I are mostly tradesmen, shopkeepers and artisans) are always criticising things constantly among us. Later I thought if we are criticising things and if they are bad and you are good then you have got to do something to change this. Then I thought, I must come forward and to work towards this end. If you go then you would deter one bad. If a man is good then he must do the same thing. So, I thought, by doing this we would clean up politics. (SÇ)

As known that grievances are the first conditions of any political action but they usually do not mean much unless an individual, one way or another, decides to take

²⁰⁸ See Kalaycıoğlu, 1998, p. 15.

action. In SÇ's case he and his associates were criticising things constantly and these discussions led him to take action. Having a clear objective such as deterring one 'bad politician' from office by involving as the 'good' in politics. Alongside religious reasons, he firmly believes that if the 'good people' like himself and friends get into active politics rather than just passively criticising things constantly they can serve a cause; to provide some sort of public good.

The Second case is Nizami Demir, he is one of the oldest of my informant group. He is sixty-eight years old and has been actively engaged politics since late 1960s. He joined the Islamic movement with the foundation of the Milli Nizam Partisi (National Order Party) the first party born out of the Islamic movement in 1969. He explains why he joined the Islamic movement and became a political activist.

I have been within this movement since the National Order Party (1969) and the reason for my membership was, I wanted to serve the rise of Islam, for the sake of Allah and in order to establish a state that is based on Allah's laws the Sharia. When I joined the party no one asked or guided me there. I myself searched and decided to join. I have passionately devoted myself to this cause; it is for the sake of Allah. I hoped and wanted to live a true Islam with its real meaning and so joined the party. (ND)

The first thing that Nizam Demir tells is his desire to serve Islam for its rise. He says it is for the sake of Allah. A similar statement made by another activist:

For me the most important reason was to support our Islamic cause. Also, supporting the VP to rescue Tayyip Erdoğan and Hoca from imprisonment, as well as defending the İmam-Hatips [religious schools]" (Halis, VPs Aktepe neighbourhood Representative).

Mütalip Özbay says that: "It is an attempt to make the religion of Islam prosper. I believed that I can find a better opportunity under the WP/ VP government, and live my life as my religion orders me".

A great many of them joined the VP because it is an Islamist party. For example Fazlı Dalkıran of Yeşiltepe Neighbourhood says : "... it is an Islamist party and inclined towards Islam. Where there is Islam there we are." In the case of religious beliefs and party preferences, the party's attitudes towards religious beliefs are also determinant

factor for membership. "I have joined the VP because it is a party which most suites to my religious beliefs"[FD].

The fact that the VP has an Islamist outlook attracts like-minded people from all walks of life. Naci Tunalı, representative of Ekin Başak Neighbourhood also joined for similar reason. He said:

Because it is close and warm to Islam. We are raised in this way; there would not be any other party. It was only the WP who provided a life that Islam orders us. It proposes *adil düzen* (just society) as well.

Mustafa Şahin a member of the municipality parliament of Mamak replied to my question in this way: "[I joined the party] because of its Islamsit worldview, and its Islamist policies".

To serve or to support the Islamic cause, to establish an Islamic regime as they put it, is one of the most frequently given reason among this group. It can be argued that those activists who join the party for the cause of Islam are ideologically more radical then the other VP activists. It has been observed by the students of political sciences that ideological radicalism is one of the most important causes of the political participation (Ashford, D 1972; Barnes and Kaase, 1979; Marsh, A, 1990 and Milbrath and Goel, 1977). There is such group among the WP/VP's activists who joined the party to serve the Islamic cause, to establish a regime that based on Koran's principles. They would argue that all Muslim communities unless an unbeliever's army occupies them must live by the God's book and orders, not by men made laws and rules. From this perspective for this group Turkey as a staunchly secular state is not the place where they can live by the Koran. This perspective, obviously, makes them to get involve politics in a more active way. As Kitschelt, H (1989,p.407) suggested those party militants who are more radical and calling for rapid, comprehensive and profound changes in the society and politics, are more likely to be recruited by the political parties, make converts among party activists and gain office.

²⁰⁹ A similar observation done by Seyd and Whiteley, 1992, p. 100.

Perhaps than, it is not surprising to have high numbers of participants joining the VP for religious reasons, because religion has been a social variable that influences political preferences, and this happens in the Turkish case too.

As Jennings, Allerbeck and Rosenmay (1979, p. 463) argued that:

“Although advanced industrial societies are becoming increasingly secularised, the vestiges of religious cleavages are impressive indeed. One of the most successful predictors of party allegiance and voting in most Western European countries remains religious preference, however nominal that preference may be. Many European parties are divided into the secular versus confessional based, and sometimes within the later between Catholic and non-Catholic...Moreover, religious institutions continue to be strongly evident in all countries.”

In another major study religion was placed among the seven variables that influenced political participation such as education, income, sex, age, race, religion and location. (See Verba and Nie, 1972, pp. 97-101). Despite the changing value systems²¹⁰ “most of the political parties are still organized around Old Political cleavages of class and religion” (Dalton, 1998, p. 148). The interaction of religion and politics is a historical fact. It was religion that dominated almost every aspect of social life for centuries. When the political parties emerged it was there and ready to provide social bases for political parties while later the class cleavage entered the arena.

Other studies also show that the influence of religion on voting behaviour continues. (See Kalaycıoğlu, E 1998: 10). In Turkey there exists a historical socio-cultural cleavage that runs along the secular/religious divide.

If we go back to the empirical data there are a variety of statements that describe what they really meant by religious reasons. Some of them joined the party to support the *İslami dava* (cause of Islam), or so that the religion of Islam could prosper as well as to support the establishment of a Sharia regime on the basis of the Koran. For some it was the VP's warm and intimate approach to Islam, while others said ‘because it is compatible with my Islamic identity’.

In many societies, including Turkey, religion is one of the bases of political ideology. (Turan, 1994, p. 42). As a primary element of culture religion has acted as a constant

²¹⁰ See Inglehart, R., and Klingemann, 1979, pp. 203-214.

source of political ideology. Especially in times of rapid change, religion provides certainty, stability and continuity.

As one would expect there appears to be a close correlation between Islamic identity and party membership. For example Remzi Özcan a representative of the neighbourhood of Misket said that:

We all have an Islamic identity. For me the most important reason was the VP's Islamic character that is compatible with my religious beliefs. When I decided to join a political party I went to different political parties and listened to different discussions, in the end I saw that I had a deep-rooted passion for this party. I said, so this is the party where I am going to work and God let me do so'.

Similarly other activists argued that the VP represents an Islamic identity. This fact is very important for people who are very loyal to their religion. Now I shall look at the second most cited reason for party membership.

5.3.2 Ideological Motives: Loyalty to the National and Sacred Values

On the second rank of table 5.7 come the ideological reasons. The VP's loyalty to the national and sacred values seems to play an important role when activists decide to join. More than one in five (21 percent) of the VP activists joined the party because they see the Virtue party, like its predecessors, is the only party loyal to the *milli ve manevi değerler* (the national and sacred values). In general terms, respect for the national and religious values and traditions, desire for the preservation of the traditional life style, old customs, and above all a glamorisation of the past are the main ideological values shared by VP members. Also, in this context, it is important to recall that the *milli ve manevi değerler* (national and sacred values) have always been at the centre of the ideology of the Islamic movement in Turkey (See Sarıbay, 1985, p. 99; Yücekök, 1971, pp.175-178 and Yücekök 1997).

Muhlis Karaağaç, from neighbourhood of Kutlu in Mamak, comes from Sungurlu a sub-district in the district of Çorum. He was born in 1949; his father was a *kapıcı* (doorkeeper) in Sungurlu. He moved to Ankara when he was 13 years old where he studied in a vocational training college. He got involved in a right wing student union

at an early age and later joined the ultra nationalist *Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi* (MHP) National Action Party (NAP).

MK We are, from birth, inclined towards right wing parties. I finished Elementary School in Sungurlu and when I was going to start the high school I came to Ankara. Through a friend of mine I got involved in *Milli Turk Talebe Birliđi* (The National Turkish Student Union in 1975. After my graduation from high school the left-right clash started and my father was shot by Dev Sol (Revolutionary Left) people. Then I shot one of them and got imprisoned.

I was originally a member of the Nationalist Action Party (NAP) and at that time the NSP seemed pacifist to us or so we thought. After the military coup in 1980 I was not involved in any political party until 1987. In 1987 we (my five brothers) and me set up the first NAP's *Bizimocak* branch in *Dereboyu Street* where no leftists were allowed to enter. I was a member of the NAP at that time but came from the same social background as the majority of the WP/VP people. For example we pray five times a day, we are true believers, and we always defended these people in our work place. I mean, no matter what your outlook, because I was praying regularly they would call me *Refahli-Refah's* people-. To tell the truth I was defending the ideas of WP but I was not a member or anything like that. Finally I joined the WP. The most important reason for my membership was its loyalty and respect for the national and religious values.

This short summary of Mr Karaađaç's schooling and migration from Çorum to Ankara and the process of joining the WP/VP tell us a lot about his political orientation. Starting from on early age, he has always identified himself with right wing politics. As a child he was raised in a poor working class family, his father was a doorman and most probably was not able to maintain his overcrowded family in Sungurlu so migration was essential for the family's survival. In Ankara he got involved in ultra nationalist student movement, became an activist, and got caught up with the street violence that characterized the 1970s. He shot someone from a leftist group and got imprisoned for a while. But as he grew older he started to move towards the WP and finally became a member and activist 1994. The most important reason he gave was that of WP/VP loyalty and respect for the national and sacred religious values. He is not alone, by any means, in his choice of the WP for ideological reasons, and loyalty to the national and religious values.

There are some issues that we should underline. The first one is the ideological aspect of party membership. S. Çelik points out that he joined the VP because he believed

that the pro-Islamic Fazilet (Virtue) party is the closest to his beliefs and worldview. There is a sense of purpose as he states that if one good person enters politics he/she would eliminate one 'bad' politician from politics. So a sense of personal impact on politics and ideological factors was his reason for joining the party.

Twenty one percent of my informants joined the party for similar ideological reasons. In the case of Remzi Özcan from the neighbourhood of Misket, he too was formerly close to the ultra right wing the Nationalist Action Party and like many others he migrated to Ankara to find a job in his early teens. He explains:

I was close to the MHP (NAP), I mean in my childhood I was with the NAP as were 90 percent of the people from the district of Yozgat. Before the military coup of 1980, approximately 90 percent of Yozgat supported the NAP. At that time I was a student. After school I went away to find job. There I started to join political gatherings, meetings and so on. By then because of my Islamic identity I liked Hoca's [N. Erbakan] speeches so started to listen to him... As I said, the most important reason for my membership was the ideological closeness. It is also close to my religious beliefs, because I have got an Islamic identity and I saw that there are big similarities between my beliefs and the WP's ideology. Before joining the WP/VP I thought, and enquired about some of the other political parties, I listened to their speeches and attended their meetings. I saw that none of them were for me, so I said well this is it, it is the WP where you are going to serve people. And Allah helped me to get to work for this party. I am here because it follows Allah's path.

He continues:

I have no material expectations from my service for this cause. For ten years I have been working personally for this party without any expectations or any material gain. I have never asked for any favour or put forward any demand to the party. So far I have been managing the things by my own resources, self sufficiently. I do whatever I can do and up to the point I can carry on.

There are great similarities between the last two cases. Both identified themselves with the ultra nationalist NAP in their youth and both approached political Islam for ideological reasons, national and religious values. In this interview Mr Özcan highlights a very interesting aspect of political activism that is the expectations of the party membership. As I argue in chapter 6, membership has certain responsibilities and benefits. Although the rights and responsibilities of party membership vary according to the party type, in most cases it is the resources, material benefits or influence gained from membership. Özcan says that "I never asked any favour or forwarded any demand" at the same time he actually indicates that there are such activists within the

VP who benefit either materially or otherwise from their membership, which is usually seen as the by-product of party activism. Obviously this matter is rather sensitive and hard to talk about but Özcan's interview provides some insight. There are many more activists who joined the VP for ideological reasons. In a similar vein some others responded:

I chose the VP because it behaves according to my beliefs." While some other joined and became activist to support their Islamic cause. One said, "The reason for my choice of the VP is that only this party is close to my beliefs, world view and my race and only the VP would protect me. (Süha Çelik, Keçiören).

It is rather remarkable to see that since the beginning of the 1970s the core ideological components: the religious and national values of the pro-Islamic party have not been dented at all. In other words they are still the highest ranking values. In the field this fact was mentioned by many party activists. For example a retired worker from the Turkish Railway told me that:

The reason I am in this party is that the VP gives greater priority to religious values. Also they are trustworthy, would not steal or deny anyone's rights. The leadership is uncorrupted. I used to be supporter of the NAP but later they got corruption and started to turn into the criminal gangs in every corner.

The fact that the majority of VP activists appear to be more radical than the VP leadership and the ordinary VP voter seems to be a paradox, and a contradiction to my original hypothesis. In chapter one, I hypothesised that the rise of political Islam was not necessarily a result of a re-Islamization of society, widespread Islamic revivalism or an expansion of Islamic fundamentalism. Rather it was partly a reaction against the major socio-economic shifts and partly due to the WP/VPs very well organised, militant grassroots organisations. How can this paradox be explained?

Before I move to explain this seemingly paradoxical situation I shall first explain how this group was defined as 'radicals'. The criterion to define who are the radicals and who are not is based two variables: the first one is the incentives that the activists declared as the most important reason for their involvement. The second variable is their attitude of secularism; their opinion on the separation of state and Church. I have classified three broad dimensions of the VP's ideology, the religious radicalism, the religious conservatism and the centre-right or centrism. Those who declared religious

and ideological reasons were placed on the right of ideological left-right scale. Among the radicals those who declared desire for establishing an Islamic state (sharia) regime, live by the God's orders, serving the Islamic cause etc., were classified as radical group. Those who declared non-religious or ideological reasons e.g. the VP is best party to solve country's socioeconomic problems, helping the poor, honest and trustworthy etc., were placed on the left side of ideological spectrum. In between there is those religious conservative who joined the party because of its respect for the religious and nationalistic values, respect for beliefs etc.,

The level of ideological radicalism is closely connected with the 'principality' reasons. Principality reasons are the religious principles that every Muslim men and women must live by, which means living by the principles of the holy book Koran. They joined the party to support the Islamic causes, or to establish sharia (Islamic) regime. For them every Muslim must live under the Sharia regime, in other words this is the fundamental principle of Islam, it is God's order. As pointed out elsewhere that ideological radicalism is one of the determinants of high level of political participation. Seyd and Whiteley (1992, p.100) argued that

"Ideological radicalism should motivate activists to become more involved than the inactive members, because the reward for their involvement is the ability to give expression to deeply held beliefs".

Some students of political parties have long studied the paradox that we mentioned above. May (1973, p. 135) argued that political parties as many other organisations, are stratified. This stratification is reflected in terms of ideological variations between the different sections of the party activists on the one hand and the leadership and voters on the other. From Moisei Ostrogorski's time in the nineteenth century to M. Duverger in the 1960s May (1973), Kitschelt (1989) and Seyd & Whiteley (1992) the Special Law of Curvilinear Disparity has been observed by many students of political parties. It implies that voters, party activists and leaders have divergent political ideologies (Seyd and Whiteley 1992, p. 100). According to Kitschelt curvilinear is more likely to occur among specific groups of activists below the leadership stratum. For him curvilinear between voters, leaders and the political activists is closely connected with the party system-e.g. Curvilinearity is more likely to occur in two party system democracies like in the UK the US, less so in other party systems (1989, pp.400-421).

As Seyd and Whiteley argued the ranks-and-file activists in a political party are more radical than the party leadership on the one hand, and the party voters on the other (1992, p.100). The empirical findings in this chapter suggested that there is curvilinearity between the VP's activists on the one hand the leader and party voters. At the first glance it seems that an ideological gulf between a groups of individuals within the same party is unthinkable but their positions within party led them to different ideological positions.

Is there any evidence of an ideological gulf between the voters and party activists within the VP? It seems that such an ideological gap exists (see Table 5.7). For example a study, in 1997, discovered that among WP voters only one third of them voted for the party because it was an Islamic party (see Heper, 1997, p.35). The law of curvilinear disparity is visibly illustrated when comparing Heper's (1997) findings with table 5.7. The comparison of the data (table 5.7) with data from Heper (1997, p.35) suggests that there is a disparity between the grassroots activists and the WP/VPs voters. Three in five (62 percent) of my respondents joined the party because of religious and ideological incentives whereas according to a survey (See Heper, M 1997, p.35) 'only one-third of the WPs voters voted for the party primarily because it was an Islamic party'.

Another similar but more recent nationwide study has found that one in five (19.8 percent) of voters across the country wanted Sharia and would vote for the WP/VP for this purpose (TÜSES 1999:69). But as the study breaks down the data it emerges that less than half of them who said they would vote for VP (47.6 percent) wanted a Sharia regime because it is the 'necessity/condition of Islam'. More precisely 47.6 percent of those who wanted Sharia regime did so for "principality" reasons.²¹¹ However the other half of the voters wanted Sharia regime for "functional" rational reasons. In

²¹¹ I am using the "*ilkesel*" "principality" and "*araçsal*" "functional" reasons in the sense that defined by TÜSES (1999, p.71) and Özbudun, E (2000, p.90). Principality reasons applies those voters who saw an Islamic political order as indispensable to their religious beliefs. In other words, sharia for them is the most fundamental inseparable and existential condition of their religious beliefs. From the principality point of view every Muslim community, every men and women must live in an Islamic regime by the law of Koran. The "functional" reasons on the other hand are not religious but by product of it. For example some of the voters thought that Islamic regime is good for economic and political reasons. For some others Islamic regime would promote virtues and moral values in the society.

other words two in five (39.8 percent) of this group wanted a Sharia regime because they believed it is a better system for political, social and economic reasons. What this second comparison tells us is that although the margin between the activists and voters narrowed in TÜSES (1999, p.69) study, there is still a 12 percent gap between these two groups of individuals.

Finally, because 62 percent of my informants expressed either religious or ideological incentives as the most important reason for their membership in the WP/VP, it indicates a strong ideological and radical presence among VP grassroots activists. And it seems at this point, we can answer one of our initial questions 'what draws members to join the party in the first place?' The answer has to be the ideological radicalism because it seems that on average the members are twice as radical as ordinary VP voters.

5.3.2.1 The Role of Ideology in Political Participation

It appears that one of the most acknowledged predictors of political participation is ideology and for the same reason ideology is the most studied factor of the political process.²¹² Every thing other than ideology is part of culture, especially the political culture.²¹³ But ideology can be distinguished from political culture by its clarity, coherence, and greater internal consistency. Because of its consistency it can influence political action more than political culture. Ideology also "contains a set of political values, states to be desired and, if possible, striven for, attained and maintained" (Dowse and Hughes, 1986, p.236). Therefore it can be said that to understand a particular political ideology is to understand that political culture. I will briefly introduce the development of the Islamic ideology in Turkey but first let us to emphasize a few important points regarding the importance of ideology in political process, especially, its role on the party support and membership.

Empirical evidence suggests that the rate of conventional political participation is positively influenced by the degree of political sophistication (Klingemann, 1979,

²¹² There is a sizeable body of literature concerning ideology and political participation that is impossible to cite here all. For a selected literature see Ashford, 1972; Barnes and Kaase 1979; Dowse and Hughes, 1986; Milbarth and Goel, 1977; Marsh, 1990; Verba and Nie, 1972).

²¹³ Dowse, R and Hughes, J 1986, especially see chapter 8

p.281). The first function of ideology is to help individual order, retain and understand political information. It provides a framework into which new information can be placed, coded and given wider meaning. It become possible to process new information once a framework has been established. The level of ideological thinking in other words 'ideological conceptualisation', is seen as the first and most important precondition for making and acting upon political judgements, but says Marsh (1990, p. 58), it is not always a sufficient condition. For him "it is when the holder of an organised body of political knowledge identifies with one set of ideological values, within the Left, Right, or whatever, that strong political judgements are made."

According to Daniel Bell, ideology can be described as 'the conversion of ideas into social levers'. For him ideology has the capacity to make people take action. Again he suggests that "the most important, latent, function of ideology is to tap emotion"²¹⁴ So that those who share this ideology will act to achieve the ends indicated by these ideology. As far as G. Sorel is concerned ideology creates a sense of mission and nobility. It creates solidarity amongst believers.²¹⁵

In terms of ideology and value consciousness on average my informants have a high level of ideological conceptualisation and strong adherence to national and sacred values. A Europe wide study found that the level of ideological thought and political action are very closely connected and those who acquire a high level of political thought tend to participate in high level political activity e.g. become political activists (see Marsha, 1990, Chapter 3; and Klingemann, 1979, p.279). It seems this generalisation also applies to VP activists in Turkey. I have observed that the majority of the VP members seem to have a high level of ideological conceptualisation and ideological recognition; party activists especially seemed to have a very advanced knowledge of Turkish politics, and knowledge of current socio-economic and political issues.

Although I have processed the religious and ideological reasons separately they can be seen as a different way of expressing the same thing. It can be argued that the religious reasons (40.42 percent) and ideological reasons (21.42 percent) such as ideological closeness, loyalty to the national and sacred/ religious values can in fact

²¹⁴ Cited in Dowse and Hughes, 1986, p.238.

²¹⁵ Cited in *ibid*, p. 238.

be placed under the *principle of Islamism* that includes the principles of Islam and the desire for greater Islamisation in society.²¹⁶ In this case those who choose to become members and activists of the VP comprise almost two thirds (62 percent) of all VP activists.

5.3.3 The VP is the best for Country

The main incentive for this group's involvement with the VP is "the collective positive incentive" resulting from the implementation of a party programme or the value of collective goods. Whiteley, Seyd and Richardson have developed the collective benefit incentive (1994; see also Seyd and Whiteley 1992: Chapter 4 and 5). It is assumed that those party activists who closely agree with the general party views should have the greatest incentive to seek the implementation of those policies and therefore work hard in their constituencies (Ibid 1994:114).

As already noted two in five of my informants joined the VP for reasons other than religious or ideological. Nearly half of this group (14 percent of all VP grassroots activists) joined the VP because they thought it was the best available option among political parties to solve the country's problems (see table 5.7). This category will be examined under two sections. The first group, which consists of 14 percent of all informants, expressed their trust in the VP to serve the country better. What incentives drew them to join the VP? It is apparent from some of the interviews that there are individuals who joined the party thinking of the welfare and well being of the people.

"I thought about how I can contribute to the welfare and the well-being of the people of Turkey. In this process the VP appeared as the party in which I could do these things if I joined, and so I became a member of it. Otherwise there wasn't any personal expectation or any thing like that." (Representative of neighbourhood of Aşağıyrançı).

The representative of the neighbourhood of Aşağıyrançı clearly indicates the elements of the solidaristic views among the grassroots activists. It is a desire to

²¹⁶ According to Kalaycioglu (1998, p.9) since the 1950s, traditionalists, including the centre right and religious right, have maintained the upper hand in electoral contests. For him they tried to carry out policies that were geared to accomplishing their version of a good society in Turkey. He argued "in the very core of that exercise rests the role of religion in socio-economic relations and politics of country."

contribute to the welfare and happiness of others with whom activists associate. In this context it can be argued that unlike the first two categories of participants this third group joined the VP for non ideological and religious reasons. This means they are not concerned with Islamic principles but with worldly, everyday problems such as how to help others in society, and how to solve long term socio-economic problems.

As mentioned earlier the WP/VP developed a new political rhetoric from the early 1980s onwards: "serving the people". Thinking in a historical context it has never been the case. It has always been the other way around; only the state deserves citizen's service and obedience. Since one party rule, this view has been the mainstream approach among political parties. Contrary to this approach one of the VP leaders says that politics is a competition for the 'best servant of the people'. In a similar vein another informant said:

I wanted to be a member of the VP because they could serve our country much better. They are trustworthy, treat everyone equally, they like their fellow citizens and are the best people."

He carries on:

Our organisation is like a family where there is always solidarity and cooperation between friends. Even sometimes without visiting my own relative we would visit our friends. ... What we do right now is what the leftist people used to do in the past.

Similarly the representative of the A.Pasa neighbourhood argued:

"They have been doing a good job for the country and would not steal, or eat state's money and provide good service".

The expression of "they have been doing good job for the country" strongly indicates the reason behind his support for the VP. That is the firm belief of the collective benefits or public good resulting from the implementation of a party programme²¹⁷ in this case by the Virtue party through its socio-economic policies.

The second element is that the party is seen as honest, trustworthy, morally superior and uncorrupted. Widespread corruption and corrupt politicians has been a matter of

²¹⁷ See Seyd, Richardson and Whiteley 1994: 114.

concern for some time in Turkey. Since the 1980s the issue of political corruption, bribery, nepotism, favouritism, combined with organised criminal gangs, some business circles and Mafia connections have become common elements of the political scenery. For example Hasan Tuzun from the Ayvali neighbourhood highlights the lack of any interest among mainstream political parties to protect the rights of the disadvantaged sections of society, instead they are seen as corrupt and involved in organised crime. For him the opposite is true for the VP. He says that:

I found the VP closer to me because they defend the rights of the poor and the weak people. They are never involved with the Mafia or organised criminal gangs.

For representatives of the Hurel neighbourhood the matter of concern was similar to that of previous informants: 'the political situation, widespread injustice, plight of the nation, and the socio-economic conditions' were the main reason he joined the party.

He continues,

I believe that the WP/VP would solve these problems better than any other party. Also, personally I do not trust any of the other parties.

Here again the driving force behind his participation was a sense of dissatisfaction with the current social and economic conditions social inequalities and mistrust of other political parties.²¹⁸ Within this category there are informants who joined the party with the considerations of economic material development combined with the spiritual one. The Turkish modernisation project has always been overly concerned with the concept of secularisation. So Islam and religious institutions were pushed aside, imprisoned within the private sphere. The control over religion loosened over time but it has never been free from state interference. This fact has always caused grievance, resentment and disapproval within certain sections of society. This fact was explored and to a degree exploited by the religious NSP in the 1970s and the WP until its closure in 1998. As one of my informants put it, the pro-Islamic parties advocate alternative development strategies, which combine the material (economic) development with the spiritual (religious) one.

Now, Hoca used to use a phrase "*maddi ve manevi kalkinma*" [material/economic and spiritual/religious development]. He was saying that we would take these two issues together. So I liked the idea. I think it is our

²¹⁸ I have discussed this point in last chapter. For an elaboration See chapter 4.

most natural right as Muslims. We need economic development as well as spiritual in this world. Every Muslim should be rich so that he can live in good faith. On the other hand Good faith is necessary when we go to the other World. Yes we are believers. Believing in all His commands, all His Verses that are sent us, is *sunet* and *sebiyets* therefore we joined the party. (İrfan Erdogan)

When we look at how and why İdris Erdogan joined the Islamic party it appears that he considered the issues addressed by the leader of WP/VP, economic development, modernisation and industrialisation not only for the material benefit of modernisation but also for spiritual development and well-being. It seems that for him the spiritual and religious aspects of social life play key role in his involvement in the Islamic movement as well as economic development of higher living standards. The issue of economic development on the basis of greater industrialisation has always been given great importance by the leadership of the Islamic movement.

It appears that they believed the VP would be effective in dealing with social, economic and political problems. For this group it was the party's programme and policies, the social and economic issues which the VP have been promoting which appealed to this group. It appears that 60 percent of VP grassroots activists are more radical in ideological and religious terms than ordinary voters (see table 5.7). However the ordinary WP/ VP voters are more concerned with socio-economic problems than Islamic values or the ideology of Islam.

This view was shared by 40 % of my informant group. Indeed it was the main reason for involvement. The majority of the WP/ VP s voters are from the bottom of the social scale: from the lower middle and lower classes, low wage and salary earners, small shopkeepers, artisans and poor peasantry. The majority of them live in *gecekondus* encircling the metropolitan areas.

The World Bank classified Turkey as upper-middle-income economy.²¹⁹ Her GNI (gross national income) per capita was calculated at around \$ 3,100 in 2000.²²⁰ Undoubtedly, the most fundamental economic problem is the disturbing income polarisation between the poor and rich in Turkey. In 1994 the poorest 20 percent get

²¹⁹ For the World Bank's definition see <http://www.worldbank.org/data/countryclass/classgroups.htm>

²²⁰ See <http://www.worldbank.org/data/databytopic/GNPPC.pdf>

only the 5.43 percent of total income while the richest 20 % received the 50 percent of all income (See table 6.9). Unfortunately there is no available data for the average income for the gecekondu areas. However as argued in chapter 4 gecekondu consists of the poorest sections of urban population. It is highly likely that majority of the wages of those who are employed in formal sector in gecekondu would be earning in line with the minimum wage that is calculated by the government. In April 1999 the minimum wage for those over 16 years olds was 68, 000,000 TL per month which was equivalent of 178 US dollars in a month.

According to a study by TESEV (2000) (Turkish Economic and Social Research Foundation) there is a close connection between income distribution and voting patterns. When analysing the 1995 election results the TESEV found that across Turkey the majority of those people whose income varied from \$654 to \$1000 p/a voted for the Welfare Party. Another important finding of the TESEV study was that the outcome of the electoral process is being decided by the big metropolitan cities like Istanbul, Ankara and Izmir. Furthermore, the balance of the vote in these cities is being determined by the 'urban poor' who live in the *varoşlar* (gecekondu) areas. The study results indicated that in gecekondu the most important factor for voting behaviour was economic.²²¹ Those parties who are aware of this fact developed strategies to attract the gecekondu vote.

It was reported that the VP was very active in gecekondu suburbs of Istanbul. As part of the election campaigning the VP often addressed the essential problems of gecekondu: unemployment and poverty. Apart from its election strategy the VP organised charities and "financial help" for the most needy. At the 1995 general elections, the WP developed the policy of *Adil Düzen* (Just Society). Following the WP's closure its successor the VP left the rhetoric of *Adil Düzen* (Just Society), but this time, to compensate this shift, it adopted more explicit leftist policies during the last elections (1999) the VP.²²²

The same trend continued with the last general elections of 18 April 1999. "Poverty gave its response at the ballot box" reported Milliyet. It continued "In this election

²²¹ TESEV's study was reported by Milliyet 22 January 1999.

²²² Ibid.

too, due to widespread income inequalities, people voted for the marginal/extreme parties like VP, NAP and HADEP instead of mainstream central parties.”²²³ As the TESEV study points out the urban poor who make up a substantial proportion of the urban and general population have been supporting the WP/VP because of its policies on unemployment and poverty. During the 1990s the WP (later the VP) appeared as the party of *gecekondus*, and addressed their vital problems.

For example, one of my informants Mehmet Balcı- a pharmacist from the Şenlik quarter. Unlike the majority of my informants he was born in Ankara and was not a migrant. He is a university graduate, married with two children – He says :

“ I saw that the VP approaches Turkey’s problems in a more rational way... There is a wonderfully close relationship between the party and the people. It was this coordination and co-operation between the VP and people that drew me to this party.”

For M. Balcı the way that the VP approaches Turkey’s problems was the key factor for his involvement. It may or may not be the rational choice at the individual level but the rationality of the VP’s socio-economic program and policies, and his trust in the VP’s potential to serve the country was the main reason for his membership. At the second level, it seems that the ‘wonderfully close relationship’ between the party and potential voters played a significant role. In particular he draws attention to the high level of co-ordination and co-operation between the VP and its people.

It must be said that this close interaction, co-operation and co-ordination has a significant meaning. As the only mass membership party the WP/VP developed a close relationship and cooperation between the party and the potential voter.²²⁴ Thus it made a real difference in terms of voter turnout and public support for the VP. The closer relationship between the party and the people gave the VP a very positive image. This positive image can then be translated into voter support at the elections. This aspect was also a frequently expressed reason for many grassroots activist for their close involvement with the party.

²²³ See Istanbul daily Milliyet 20 April 1999.

²²⁴ See Berkey, 1996, p. 45; Çakır, 1994, pp. 216-232; Özbudun, 2000; Sayarı, 1996, p. 36.

5.3.4 Other Reasons: trustworthiness/cleanliness, loyalty to leadership, protecting the poor.

The fourth group from Table 5.7 was classified as others. This group gave other reasons than religious or ideological ones. They make up 17 percent of the total informant group. They see the VP as trustworthy, which means politically clean, uncorrupted and the party of the poor. Some said they trust the VP because it would not steal people's money, and it is open and clean unlike other parties. Some of them expressed loyalty to the leadership. There are people who support the VP as an act of solidarity because of what they see as the unfair treatment by the media, security forces and other parties. In the first place comes the issue of corruption and the party's record on this matter.

In a country where public resources and power are distributed, by and large, through client list networks there is inevitably a high degree of widespread corruption and injustice. I stated earlier that corruption, favouritism and clienteles have reached a degree, which threatens the very existence and continuity of the Turkish state. The widespread corruption and nepotism has not just created an atmosphere of contempt, resentment and alienation of large sections of society but it has also allowed a small group of multi-millionaires to mushroom while the problems of unemployment and poverty get deeper and deeper. This fact has also dangerously eroded the most fundamental ethical and moral values in society.

It can be argued that this widespread corruption has also badly damaged the country's economy. According to a research report, which was released during this year's Davos summit (2001 Davos economic forum) by Price Waterhouse Coopers (PWC), Turkey is in fourth place after China, Russia and Indonesia among thirty-five countries where the corruption and non-transparent governance is seriously damaging the economy. The report suggested that every year 36 percent of public funds, corrupt politicians, bureaucrats, business and mafia/organized criminal gangs in Turkey steal tax and state revenues. This means an ordinary taxpayer had to pay 36 percent extra

taxes last year.²²⁵ With this background it is not hard to imagine why and how the public lost its faith in mainstream political parties in the early 1990s. Ordinary people believe that all politicians and parties are involved in corruption to some degree but the question is which party does it less. In this case because of its religious orientation, and supposed moral superiority the WP/VP have the upper hand in elections.

It seems that moralist politics have been developing as a reaction against institutionalised and widespread corruption scandals, patron-client relations, and non-transparent governance. The more politics is dominated by moral issues the more the WP/VP will continue to attract mass voter support, as well as increase its membership.

Here are some of my informants' views on the WP/VP. Ahmet Çavuşoğlu a member of the Mamak ilçe executive committee, explains what he thought about the VP when he joined:

I have found the WP/VP truthful and genuine. Their words and promises match with their actions. You could not see this in other parties. This party comes from within the people so it deals with the people's problems. It acts with the people.

Similarly the representative of Bahçeleriçi neighbourhood argued that:

[The VP] are trustworthy, uncorrupted, genuine, truthful and would not promise anything that they could not keep. What they say is that they work for the sake of Allah..." There are people who have been discriminated against because of their beliefs. It is something that is widespread. All citizens feel that way. For example my wife is veiled and she won't lower it even if you offered an apartment from the Çankaya district. But my daughters do not wear headscarf and they won't wear it for an apartment in Çankaya either.

He points out the moral and ethical characteristics that were important for his involvement with the party. The characteristics that he highlights such as trustworthiness are what normally every political party should have, but it is often not the

²²⁵ See *Hürriyet* (daily), Istanbul, 30 January 2001, "Türkiye yolsuzluk liginde dördüncü oldu" (Turkey got the fourth place on the league of corruption); *Radikal*, (daily), Istanbul, 30 January 2001, "Karanlık İşlerde Zirve Yolundayız" (March to the pick on the path of dark, dirty business) We are on the fourth place on the way of dark businesses.); *Milliyet*, (daily), Istanbul, 30 January 2001, "Yolsuzlukta ilk dörde girdik" (We got the fourth place on the corruption iseses"); *Yeni Evrensel*, (daily), Istanbul "Davosun Ardından (After Davos)", 01 February 2001.

case. He also raises the issue of discrimination and repression on the basis of religious and ideological beliefs. Such issues are obviously very important and are discussed below. For now I return to the issue of corruption and its implication for politics throughout the last two decades.

5.3.4.1 Widespread Corruption

Corruption has infected all institutions and many layers of society since the 1980s. The reason for this widespread and persistent corruption has been the involvement of three important circles: *derin devlet* (deeper state or the inner circle), the Mafia and the politicians. One of the prime reasons for this scale of corruption cases is the low-intensity war against the Kurdish rebel group, the PKK, in the Southeast. In the name of national unity and defence of the country against the separatist movement, many unlawful acts have been carried out. During the last decade Turkey witnessed rampant corruption, gigantic scandals and abuse of public funds, which has inevitably eroded the already low public confidence in political parties and parliament. No wonder that for more than a decade politicians have been the least trusted and respected people in Turkey.²²⁶ Loss of confidence in the political elite has badly affected the political parties to the point that for more than a decade no party has been able to obtain a majority or even over 25 percent in parliament to form a single party majority government. Consequently, unstable and patchy coalition governments have ruled Turkey since the 1991 general elections.

Although the relationship between the: the *derin devlet* the Mafia/business and politicians/bureaucrats was speculated for a long time, a traffic accident involving a lorry and a Mercedes near a town called Susurluk opened a Pandora's box.²²⁷ It

²²⁶ A new study has found that political parties and parliament (The Grand National Assembly) are the least trusted group among Turks. The degree of trust for parliament is 3.2 out of 10, and political parties received just 2.1 out of 10. See TESEV's study *Türkiye de Yolsuzluklar Hane Halkı Araştırma Sonuçları* (The Results of The Study of Corruptions in Turkey) 28 February 2001. TESEV's web address: www.tesev.org.tr

²²⁷ Susurluk is the name of a small town near to Balıkesir but with this famous traffic accident it was transformed and came to describe a phenomenon in Turkish politics. On November the 3 1996, a Mercedes automobile collided with a lorry 4 miles away from the town of Susurluk-Balıkesir. At first it seemed a very ordinary accident, nothing unusual on Turkish roads, but soon it became clear that one high ranking police officer Huseyin Kocadag, a runaway criminal, Mafia leader Abdullah Catli and a parliamentarian the leader of a Kurdish Tribe of Bucak Sedat Bucak were in the same car. What made the car so distinct was that this car was packed with guns, explosives, long range assault rifles and so on. This accident was a picture of the relationship between the state, the Mafia and the security forces

revealed the multiple dimensions of the corruption and the close relationship in the triangle of politicians, the Mafia and the police.²²⁸ It is believed that despite the many revelations that followed the Susurluk accident, reports by the state appointed inspector, a high judge Kutlu Savaş, media reports and accounts of many independent reporters, only the tip of an enormous iceberg has been uncovered.²²⁹ Despite the fact that there has been some degree of willingness among the ruling elite to clean up this extra ordinarily tainted infrastructure, the corruption scandals have not slowed down.²³⁰

As political corruption became more visible in everyday practices, the long forgotten ethical and moral dimensions of politics made a comeback into political discourse. Ethical and moral issues and religious values came to be considered serious election issues. Refah (Welfare), as the pro-Islamic party, rightly criticised its opponents for being unethical and immoral and claimed superiority.

In this context the WP was helped by two factors. The first was that it had not been in government since the 1980s so there was no record of corruption, scandal or any wrongdoing. Second, more importantly, because the WP was a religious Islamic party, it was able to claim moral superiority over its rivals. Indeed it did not require much effort by grassroots activists to turn this moral superiority and clean image into electoral success by the mid-1990s. By offering ethical policies, clean politics and promising to clean up the corrupt state mechanism the WP became the largest party in parliament by 1995.

which has developed over a decade and has been fuelled by the low intensity war in the Southeast against the PKK.

²²⁸ See for a detailed account of Susurluk see: <http://ilef.ankara.edu.tr/susurluk/>.

Also, a key word search (on 22/01/2001) through Google.com found 8,910 news item and articles on the Susurluk. This figure itself indicates the massive debate and importance of the Susurluk event in Turkish politics.

²²⁹ Kutlu Savaş a state prosecutor was appointed by the government to investigate the Susurluk event and produced a 400 page report. This report was important because it was the first time a state appointed prosecutor investigated such a corruption case and by and large it was objectively pointing to the relations between the mafia-criminal gangs, politician/bureaucrat and the some elements within state. For a summary of it see Hürriyet , 13 Ocak 1998, "İşte tarihi rapor" (Here is the historic report, 13 January 1998).

²³⁰ It was the first time a government in Turkey resigned because of a political scandal. M.Yılmaz Government had to resign and called the early general elections of 18 April 1999 after the Turk Bank scandal.

5.3.5 Freedom of religious beliefs and expression.

It is important to remember that the origins of the problem lie with the modernisation project, which started in the late nineteenth century and entered a new phase with the Kemalist revolution. Some of the activists and many of those with whom I had regular contact mentioned a genuine grievance and unease about their freedom of religious belief and expression. Some of the themes that my informants brought up during interviews were part of an age-old problem of the role and place of religion in Turkish republic. The republic was built in the image of the West, especially the French republic, and religion was brought under the state control as a direct consequence of the principle of secularism. The term *laicity* was borrowed from French and of course had its French approach, which is tolerant to religion.

Now we have all seen that the WP emerged as the biggest party of the right after the 1994 local election. It represents common sense. For example, we all see the torture that our young girls through in university because of the headscarf issue. Again the numbers of the Imam-Hatip (religious schools) students have fallen from 590,000 to 250,000. Economically things are not any better either. The M. Yilmaz government has not been successful. It was Erbakan who increased the civil servants' wages by 50 %. By considering all these matters I became a member of the WP/VP. (Yahya Konuk representative of the Mutlu neighbourhood).

As a modernist and secularist movement the republican elite has never been sure of what to do with one of the most influential and historically fundamental social institutions: religion. Religious freedom is part of the current political debate. It is an old one but can take different forms as well. From the mid-1980s onwards the *turban* (headscarf) issue has led to a confrontation between the secular authorities and religious movements. Since then it has been transformed into a major symbol of the freedom of beliefs and expressions. It was left to rest when the Ozal government permitted students attending school to wear headscarves but later it was banned. The *process of 28 February* (1997) once more made the *turban* issue one of the key battlegrounds in the schools and universities. For VP grassroots activists the *turban* (headscarf) is a religious obligation, every Muslim woman should wear it. Not only is it seen as a religious condition but it has also been elevated to the level of human

rights. They argue it is a matter of freedom of expression and an individual's right to wear whatever he/she wants. However the authorities see it as an ideological uniform, an extension and expression of the Islamic fundamentalist ideology and no regime should allow any party, organisation or movement to destroy democracy by using it.

The events of 28 February had many victims: the closure of the Refah party which received 6 million votes in the 1995 general elections created an atmosphere of resentment, injustice and a denial of basic rights. Those who identified with the party also felt victimised by the system. For example one of my informants, Şerif from Peyami Sefa neighbourhood, explains why he joined the WP:

I came to identify myself with the WP/VP because of the unfair treatment of the VP by all the other parties, the media, judiciary and the military. All this ill treatment made me side with the weak victim.

Victimhood is a powerful social unifier. Many ethnic or religious minority groups such as the Jews, share this experience of victimisation and it bonds these group very strongly. I observed a similar attitude among the WP/VP members and grassroots activists. Ordinary WP voters also felt that state surveillance of the Islamic movement and the closure of the WP was a direct attack on their freedom and democratic right to choose.

For some the choice of the WP/VP was due to its leadership. Loyalty or appreciation of a particular leader can be a strong incentive to join a party and even become a political activist. As happened in the case of M. Demir:

The reason behind my membership was because that year Melih bey [M. Gökçek the Mayor of Ankara since 1994] was a candidate for Ankara's metropolitan municipality in 1994. I was originally a member of the NAP like my father. But I liked M. Gökçek when he declared his candidacy from the WP I decided to become member of it too.

He continued:

I liked his speeches especially one that was on the TV with other rival candidates. They were all talking academically using academic jargon and so on. I knew that people would not understand a word of it. On the contrary Melih bey was talking plainly, clearly, like an ordinary guy. When I saw this I

said to my brothers "that's it, we will win" and we did indeed. (Melih Demir member of the nbh. Committee).

As well as personal loyalty there can be other incentives like wanting to strengthen right wing politics, as an activist from Mamak ilçe did: "I always wanted the right to be powerful and win, so for this reason I joined the VP."

For this group of activists the particular (VP) party is not so important as long as it is a right wing party. The VP is described as right wing by 7 percent of activists. The strategy that this group employed was that the WP seemed to be the most likely winner among other rightist parties so they supported and joined the party.

Contrary to the popular image -which views the WP as no more than an Islamic fundamentalist party-, surveys shows the WP combines religious and class appeals.²³¹ Between one-third and one-half of its voters support is associated with religion and ideological reasons. When the voters were asked why they voted for the WP half of them gave ideological reasons, like 'the WP's defence of religious values (20.6 %), its promise of a "just order" (13.4 %), and its respect for "national and moral values" (12.5 %). Less than one third of them (29.6 percent) saw the WP as honest and reliable party. One third (33.1 %) of all the WP's voters viewed their party as the party of the poor and oppressed"(ibid, pp.90-91). Since 1994 local elections the WP has strong roots in the gecekondu areas. By winning most of the municipalities it has diminished the left parties leading role in those low-income gecekondu areas (ibid, p.91).

It is plausible to think that the WP/VP would appeal right wing votes as well. Especially since it's forth congress in 1994 and with its closure the VP has moved its rhetoric and some of policies towards the centre. Although there is not any specific statistical data to know precisely at what extent the WP would attract support among ordinary right wing voters, it is expected that its move toward centre ground would attract votes from centrist voters who have not a particular desire for any sort of religious regime but vote for the WP/VP for its right wing stance.²³²

²³¹ Ozbudun, E 2000, p.89.

²³² See, Ibid, p.91.

As mentioned above that party activists view the media, judiciary, the state, military and other parties as hostile and unfriendly toward the WP/VP. Reaction to other parties was also an important incentive for VP activists. In addition to the above factors there has been an atmosphere of dissatisfaction with all of the mainstream political parties influencing some of my informants to join the VP.

5.3.6 As A Reaction to Other Parties: Political Dissatisfaction

Some 7 percent of all grassroots activists joined the VP because of political dissatisfaction with existing mainstream political parties. The political literature on dissatisfaction is rich. Due to constrain on space and a desire to clarity I do not review this literature in detail here. The relationship between dissatisfaction and political behaviour is at least as old as the serious study of politics it is widely believed that those who are dissatisfied are the source of public unrest, and that political violence is too often caused by individual frustration (Barnes S et al 1979, p. 381). The theory of personal dissatisfaction and political action has been greatly influenced by the concept of relative deprivation (ibid: 384).²³³ A. Marsh (1990: 110) argued that:

As soon as people realise in sufficient numbers that they are not getting the things they want and feel they ought to have, they become frustrated. Frustration leads to dissatisfaction that leads to demands, which, if unmet, will lead to anger and aggression and thence to protest action.

As Marsh puts it, frustration and dissatisfaction feed each other unless this circle is broken by adequate policy implementations. In conventional politics the personal dissatisfaction can be expressed via voting behaviour, supporting a party or possibly becoming a party activist. It is argued that policy dissatisfaction increases support for the political process and thereby political participation.²³⁴

²³³ I am using the concept of "relative deprivation" as defined by W. G. Runciman (1966). He (1966, pp.10-11) argued that: "Relative deprivation should always be understood to mean a sense of deprivation; a person who is 'relatively deprived' need not be 'objectively' deprived in the more usual sense that he is demonstrably lacking something. In addition, relative deprivation means that the sense of deprivation is such as to involve a comparison with the imagined situation of some other person or group. This other person or group is the 'reference group', or more accurately the 'comparative reference group'."

²³⁴ Dalton, 1988, p.50; also see Farah, B., et al 1979, Chp. 14.

There are grassroots activists who joined the WP/VP as a reaction to mainstream centre-right and centre-left parties. However the number of voters who voted for the WP/VP because of their dissatisfaction or disillusionment has been far greater than the number of political activists and it has far-reaching consequences on Turkish politics. There has been a significant climate of partisan realignment and electoral volatility since the mid-1980s (see Kalaycıoğlu, 1998, pp. 4-5; also Özbudun, 2000; Tosun, 1999). In fact, for some political commentators the electoral volatility and partisan realignments were partially responsible for the WP's sudden rise in the local (1994) and general (1995) elections.²³⁵ As Sayarı (1996, p. 36) find out that:

“The declining strength of the mainstream parties, especially those on the centre-right, is the best indicator of the electorates dissatisfaction with the parties’ perceived failure to resolve the country’s pressing social and economic problems. In increasing numbers, Turkish voters have deserted them and turned to the Islamists.”

For him there are three factors for the growing support of the WP. First is the widespread public disenchantment with the mainstream parties on the right as well as on the left. Secondly the militant like grassroots activism. Third the increased role and visibility of religion in Turkey.

There is no doubt that if the failure of the mainstream secular parties disillusioned voters due to continuing social, economic and political problems, the same process alienated those who felt policy dissatisfaction deeper than ordinary citizens due to peculiar characteristics (e.g. those individuals with a high social status will not just switch their party support from A to B but decide to get involved in and participate in politics at a higher degree by becoming a member of B).

5.3.6.1 The Left loses Ground to the WP in the *Varoşlar*

The WP and later the VP have exploited the vacuum created by the evaporation of social democratic parties and policies in Turkey. It was said that the left spectrum of

²³⁵Kalaycıoğlu (1998, p.12) argued that: “The Turkish party system is not only plagued by fragmentation, and the volatility of the electorate. Furthermore, in the 1990s a realignment of the vote seems to be happening, as the centre left-right spectrum rapidly diminishes, while the far-right increases with leaps and bounds.”

Turkish politics has been quickly shrinking since the 1980s and this created a vacuum. The Islamic Welfare party successfully filled this. I had a conversation in Ankara in 1999, with Ahmet Albayrak one of the campaign managers and a close aide of the newly elected Mayor of Mamak sub-district. He is a university graduate holding an MA in political science. Upon my question about his views on the WP's rise, especially in *varoşlar*, he said that:

The left lost its support in the *varoşlar* while the WP/VP got stronger. It was the left who used to welcome those newly migrated people from rural areas to the big cities. They used to build some of their houses to show solidarity and find them jobs. But later the leftist parties stopped doing this. Instead of the left, now, the VP's cadres have been doing these things.

What do you think is the reason for the loss of support for the left in Turkey?

The left was weakened because during Demirel's government they were in the government as a junior partner of the coalition,²³⁶ and controlled many municipalities. During this time they were involved in lots of corruption scandals and faced many sleaze allegations. So they lost their credibility and public confidence. They were unsuccessful too. The left betrayed the people's hopes and dreams. The people saw them as a way forward, as a hope for a better future, but they turned their backs on the people. They did not respect people's values and beliefs. ... Turkey has been changing very rapidly and this situation has created the problem of a cultural identity crisis. Our traditional elites still has this mentality "I can educate the nation, I can teach the people" but the people say "no I will be how I want to be, not how you want". In fact the situation has transformed into a class war". (Ahmet Albayrak).

Mr. Albayrak raises serious issues, which help explain the fall of the left and the unstoppable rise of political Islam in Turkey. Albayrak first points out a very major shift in the attitude of left wing parties towards their social base. The Turkish left, represented by the RPP, lost touch with its historical social base the lower middle and lower classes: salary and wage earners, poor and landless peasantry, unemployed under classes in the post-1983 period. It was no longer interested in social policies, unemployment, poverty, low wages and salaries or the widening gap between the poor and the rich. As well as shirking solidarity with *gecekondus*, the RPP dumped "social democratic policies" in favour of the free market economy, privatisation of large

²³⁶ The PP, which later became SODP (SDPP) joined the government with Demirel's TTP following the general elections of 1991. Upon the sudden death of the President T. Özal in 1993 Demirel left the government to become President but the coalition government continued under T. Çiller and M. Karayalçın until 1995.

public companies, privatisation of traditionally free public services, and large budget cuts from social programmes.

On the second level comes the corruption and unsuccessful government years as a junior partner of a coalition government with the centre right TPP and municipalities.²³⁷ On the third level the uncompromising elitism that runs deep in the leftist parties manifests itself as looking down on the people, disregarding and disrespecting local culture, traditional or religious values that are accepted and respected by the majority of the population.

5.4 Conclusion

In this chapter I discussed the roots of and reasons for party membership. I began by identifying the relationship of my informants within VP local branches. I wanted to see how they describe their position with particular local VP branches and found that a vast majority (79 percent) of them view themselves as party activists. There were other substantial groups who view their positions as activists but also hold elected office or membership at the sub-district executive committee. The rest consisted of party workers, branch administrators and so forth.

Secondly I described their present position within their particular local party branch. Two fifths (40 percent) of them were leaders of their neighbourhood committees. Some 14 percent were representatives of their neighbourhood executive committee. One fifth were members of the ilçe (sub-district) executive committees that prestigious and influential at the local level and signifies a desire for upward mobilisation. Another ten percent described their position as activist members without any elected office or membership in any kind of committee. Twelve percent of my informants were members of the youth committee, very vibrant, creative, energetic and enthusiastic units within the local branches. This figure confirms the overall ratio of youth involvement in the VP. After clarifying the relationship and the position of

²³⁷ In the local elections of the 1989 the PP later became SHP (SDPP) won many municipalities including the metropolitan cities Istanbul, Ankara, Kayseri and Mersin but due to the widespread corruption scandals it lost them in the following 1994 local elections. In this period scandals involving large publicly owned municipality companies İSKİ in Istanbul and ASKİ in Ankara were very high profile.

my informants within the VP I moved to the process of participation and becoming a member of the VP.

It is important that we grasp the process of participation including the decision-making process, and which factors play a role before an individual joins the VP. Table 5.4 shows that 38 percent of my informants joined the VP as 'self starters' which means they are highly motivated (see Whiteley, 1995, p. 223). Also it is very possible that the 'self starters' may well be the cream of party activists since they possess a high level of initiative. More than one quarter (26 percent) of activists reported that they were approached by the party via a friend.

Some 21 percent of my informants said that someone from their family played a leading role in their involvement with the party. It was observed that like numerous things in our lives, political attitudes are learned from childhood. It is a sign of persisting consequences of political socialisation to which every individual is subjected from a very early age.²³⁸ It seems that the family continues to be one of the key components of the political process and to play an important role in my informant's decision to become party members. The last group (14 percent) in this section are those who joined the party out of loyalty or personal admiration for their party leaders. They became members because they were motivated by the social norms. In this group it seems that 'party activists motivated by social norms are responding to the perceived opinions of "significant others" e.g leaders, or people whose opinions they respect and value' (see Whiteley, 1995, p.223). As was expected, a very high degree of devotion, admiration and emotional attachment was observed among all of the VP's people from ordinary rank-and-file members to the MPs in parliament.

One of the outstanding findings of this chapter would be the influence of the family on the process of participation. The breakdown of data has revealed that there is a positive correlation between family and party membership. In other words the family has a profound impact on an individual's political choice and membership in a political party. Table 5.5 shows that around four in five (79 percent) of my informants have someone in their family who is also involved with the VP.

²³⁸ See Cord et al. 1974, p.184; Dawson and Prewitt, 1969, pp. 5-6; 105.

There appeared another strong incentive for membership. Around three quarters (74 percent) of my informants viewed their role as party activities as 'very important' for VP electoral success. In fact it can be interpreted in this way: they see themselves, their campaigning activities as very important therefore they have a high perception of personal influence in politics.

The fourth aim of this chapter was to identify the major incentives of party membership. It was observed that the paths to membership were influenced by five different variables: religious, ideological, collective positive incentive including moral integrity and, finally political dissatisfaction. The literature review showed that all of the five variables have been widely recognised and extensively studied as predictors of political participation. These variables have been treated as the main predictors of political action regardless of whether it is conventional or unconventional political action.

Sixty two percent of my informants expressed either religious or ideological incentives as the most important reason for their membership in the WP/VP. This indicates a strong ideological and radical presence among VP grassroots activists that are both indicators of high political participation. The first two variables or reasons are evidence of a high level of ideological conceptualisation and ideological radicalism that is one of the characteristics of party activism and explains why members joined the VP in the first place.

The rest of my informant group, 38 percent, joined the VP for reasons other than religious or ideological. For some 14 percent of them the VP is the best for country. In other words they joined the party because of the 'collective positive incentives'. Another 16 percent joined the VP for Other Reasons: trustworthiness/ cleanliness, loyalty to leadership. They see the VP as trustworthy, which means politically clean, incorrupt and the party of poor. Some said they trust the VP because they would not steal people's money. The last group, some 7 percent of my informants said they joined the VP as a reaction to other parties. For this group the political dissatisfaction with established parties was the driving force for membership.

CHAPTER SIX

THE GRASSROOTS ACTIVISTS

The people who may not think of themselves as heroes, but in many ways are the biggest heroes of all, are the party members who stuck with us through the hard times as well as the good. ... It is you, after all, who saw us through the period of deepest despair, stuck with the party and helped see it back to power. Even when we were written off we bounced back and that was down to members and trade unions in every community continuing to fight for us. (Tony Blair, 2000)

6.1 Introduction

This chapter consists of two parts. Part one is devoted to conceptual definitions and a brief history of mass membership parties. Despite the decline of mass membership parties, membership is critical to political parties. In this context the benefits and costs of membership for the parties is discussed. For operational purposes I focus on the concepts of membership remembering that the concept differ from party to party. Later, in order to define the grassroots activists I explore the literature on membership.

In the second part of this chapter I study the socioeconomic and demographic characteristics of the Fazilet (Virtue) Party's grassroots activists. My first goal is to see whether there is a consistent and coherent pattern among active members of the VP. Then I identify members social class, educational background, occupational characteristics, employment sector, social status, and the length of time spent in the city/ urban area. Different variables will be tested and compared with data from other studies to see whether there are peculiar socioeconomic or demographic characteristics prevalent among VP activists that may have led to political participation or party activism. To this end I use some statistical data and the analysis

of recent Turkish studies on the socioeconomic, demographic backgrounds and political attitudes, voting behaviour and membership attitudes.²³⁹

6.2 The Conceptual Framework

6.2.1 The Emergence & Development of Mass Membership Parties

Political parties are the key components of representative democracy. They are the bridges between politics in general and society. Parties are the most permanent agencies of political participation and have played their role with great success.²⁴⁰ Throughout the twentieth century political parties were the key mediators between the population and the power centres, governments. In the following chapter (chap 7) I will be dealing with questions like: Do party organisations matter? Why grassroots activism is important? Why does party organisation matter? And finally I will be exploring the question of how the party organisation makes a difference? Nevertheless, in this chapter more than the mass party itself I focus on party membership. M. Duverger (1964, 63) argued that the concept of member "is linked with a particular notion of political party that was born at the beginning of the twentieth century along with Socialist parties and that has subsequently been imitated by others."

Historically the concept of membership, Duverger (1964, p.63) points out, is the product of an evolutionary process, which led from the cadre party to the mass party. The establishment of political parties in general, and particularly mass parties, was the outcome of a series of major revolutions and transformations that occurred throughout the nineteenth century. In Europe, modernisation, industrial revolution and

²³⁹ For example, TÜSES 1999 in a recent study of the social structure and the electorates/ supporters of political parties in Turkey. This study represents all Turkey and deals with various aspects of the electorate. The second one is by Ahmet Yücekök, (1997) *Dinin Siyasallaşması* (The Politicisation of Religion) is carried out in Istanbul. It has a large sample of 15.683 and deals with politics as well issues of identity. At the last part of this chapter data are compared with the findings of these studies . There are other studies like Özbudun, E (2000)'s study on contemporary Turkish politics and TESEV (2000),

²⁴⁰ See Scarrow, 1996.

urbanisation coupled with nationalism contributed to the awakening of the masses. Although, the mass party was created through nationalism and religious institutions, the real and functioning mass party emerged with the rise of the Communist and the Socialist movements between the 1840s and 1870s. By the end of the nineteenth century there was a considerable working class with institutionalised working class parties.²⁴¹

It has been argued that membership of political parties developed in an evolutionary process. When working class movements around Europe were transformed into political parties, notably in Germany where the SPD was founded in 1875/1890, and the Labour Party in 1900/1906 (See Berger 1994, p.1) membership emerged as the pillar of these political parties. In France the socialist party was born as a vehicle for the political participation of the working class.

It can be seen that mass membership was the only way for these socialist - working class parties to sustain their financial needs and undertake daily routine tasks like the organisation of local party branches, registration of new members, organisation of ward meetings, distribution of party outlets, vote canvassing, and the like.²⁴²

Working class parties also made a breakthrough by creating and utilising membership effectively for election purposes, registering new members and collecting membership fees. Thus, by the first quarter of the twentieth century working class parties were more powerful than any other party in Europe.

The mass party represented a higher stage in the process of party evolution; however,

²⁴¹ Duverger, 1964, p.63; see also Blondel, 1958, p.40.

²⁴² As Berger (1994, p.88) noted: "... In many places the SDP managed to install itself within working-class communities as a creditable alternative to other political parties. It did so by developing into a neighbourhood-based party that became meaningful to the everyday lives and struggles of the workers in a particular locality. Party members were given a strong sense of cohesion and belonging by simple organisational innovations such as the introduction of uniform membership booklets after 1907 or the weekly (sometimes monthly) payment of their membership fees."

this view began to change from the 1960s onwards. I discuss party decline below (chap 7) but for now it can be said that mass membership parties may have declined due to the lack of public interest while it may have been a matter of grave concern for politicians as well as the establishment in Western Europe, in Turkey things are quite different. There is widespread, and popular interest in politics and that has been the main concern of the political elite and the establishment. The closure of the pro-Islamic Welfare party was a reflection of this concern among the military and secularist elite.

6.2.3 Why Membership is Valued

The concept of membership was an invention of the mass parties and it represented a higher step on the ladder of party evolution. There have been some changes in the party systems. Inevitably these shifts led to the changes of the functions, scope and perception of party members. Nevertheless, as mentioned above, members remain highly valued by their parties and party leaders. For example in his centenary speech at the Old Vic theatre in south London, Labour leader Tony Blair praised local activists as the "biggest heroes" throughout the party's 100-year history. While he reminded his audience that there could be no going back to the party values of the 1980s, he used the occasion to reach out to party activists.²⁴³ By praising the grassroots activists as the "biggest heroes" of the Labour Party's hundred-year history, in effect, Tony Blair acknowledged the key position of party activists for the party's future and to reassure those activists who increasingly feel alienated from Downing Street.

According to Scarrow (1996, pp. 42-46) party members have the following benefits for the party

Legitimacy Benefits: It is rightly assumed that high numbers of members will secure a greater degree of legitimacy for a party. Legitimacy measured not in the legal sense

²⁴³ *The Guardian*, Monday 28 February 2000.

but in social terms like acceptability and popularity.

Direct Electoral Benefits: Members are valued by their parties for their electoral benefits as voters, because evidence suggests that members vote more frequently than non-member voters.

Outreach Benefits: As Scarrow (ibid. 43) puts, it even—low level members can function as ambassadors to their community, therefore they can mobilise and multiply the vote wherever they live.

Financial Benefits: Members' financial contributions are still valuable and regarded as such.

Labour Benefits: Especially at pre election times for an active election campaign members' free labour can be decisive on the outcomes of elections.

Linkage Benefits: Party members are also essential in order to maintain the connections between the party and the 'grassroots'. They behave like a bridge or nerve cell in a body, which maintains the linkage between the brain (the party) and body (the voters or public opinion).

Innovation Benefits: In an era where knowledge and information are valued as equivalent to material value, parties value their members for new ideas and improve party policies accordingly.

Personnel Benefits: Through membership party leaders get the opportunity to know their members more closely. So when leaders need new recruitment membership provides an unequivocal value.

The driving force for mass membership varies from party to party and through time and place yet there are some universal factors that come into effect.

6.2.4 The Concept of Party Membership

In order to define the membership or the 'grassroots', first we need to answer the question of who/what is a member? How can we define a member of a political party?

One of the immediate problems for the definition of a member is that it can take a different meaning from one type of party to another (see Duverger 1964, pp.142-147). Being a member of a fascist party can be very different from being a member of a Liberal Democrat Party. The totalitarian or absolutist party would require total submission and adherence from its members whereas the second would be much more flexible with its membership. For example strong obligations, several responsibilities and few privileges are typical of American parties. The opposite is true for Italy: Lombard League. (Scarrow, 1996, p.17). In different countries members may all pay dues and be enrolled on membership lists but their relationship with the party, their position and their gains from membership can be very different.

A. Leiserson argued that the extent and the nature of the party's demands on its membership give a good clue to the character of the party. He defines three types of political party and party membership. The first is what he calls, the totalitarian party, which includes Communist and National Socialist parties. Totalitarian parties are defined as demanding of their members an "exact unquestioning obedience and loyalty to its by tenets, its program, and its orders over and above the claims of government and law, family, church, employer, or trade union" (Leiserson, 1958, p.137). The criteria for membership of Communist parties are rigid and severe including recommendation by full members and a period of provisional membership varying from six months to two years, and above all approval by a party committee (Leiserson p.142). Since the days of Leiserson, however, the concept of totalitarian parties has changed dramatically. There is not, as he describes, a single Communist party today which demands an uncompromising obedience to its orders or leaders. Nationalist parties have also changed although to a lesser degree and their criteria for membership remains one of the most rigid and severe.

The second type of party that he defines is absolutist parties. These parties expect their members to observe secretly 'some religious or ethical doctrine, the solidarity of some racial or national group, or the higher ethical quality of a socioeconomic policy' (Leiserson, p.137). He points out that, although absolutist parties require application forms for membership they are far less exclusive, militant and rigidly disciplinary. As they have a broad cross section of ideological applicants such as the working class, religious brotherhoods and racial or nationality groups these parties are inclined to see

party organisation as a 'mass educational and social movement' and their members as party workers. Members "attend meetings, participate in organisation programs, speak publicly and act as a faithful carrier of the word to the rest of the potential membership group. A membership card and annual or monthly dues payments are also common attributes of such parties' membership practices..."(Leiserson, p.143). It appears that there are some contradictions between the way Leiserson describes the absolutist parties and their understanding of membership. Can they be much less exclusive, militant, monastic and much less rigidly disciplinarian? The long history of conflict, for example, in Northern Ireland, which is based on religious sectarian division, shows they are extremely exclusive and militant and monastic.

The third types are the Liberal parties. For Leiserson the majority of European and American parties can be seen in this category. A liberal party he argues "arises in a situation in which the party places the Constitution or the welfare of the Commonwealth as the highest political value, and frankly admits its instrumental, pragmatic role of providing the personnel and policies most conducive to those ends " (1958, pp.137-138). It must be said that his description of liberal parties is rather uncritical. Nevertheless his assessment of the membership conception of liberal parties is quite valid. As he (1958, p.144) states, "the liberal ideological conception of party membership is relatively loose and informal". Most liberal parties require their members to be formally enrolled in the party, but the requirements are far less exclusive, specific and demanding. It is also true that today most of the political parties in Europe and America has a similar understanding of membership. Leiserson, differentiates the type of membership according to the types of party ideologies. However, there are different types of members within one single party.

The best-known example for this is the British Labour Party. Since 1918 it has made a distinction between its affiliated members and individual members (Duverger, M 1964:61). It may look contradictory to have more than one kind of membership within a single party but this is how the relationship between parties and their members works. Some members have greater aspirations than others to devote themselves to party activities. Some have less time but greater financial resources to contribute. Others, like **grassroots activists**, have ambition, and a reasonable degree

of political education to advocate the party's views and indoctrinate other members.

This is not a simple division of labour amongst party members but constitutes different degrees of participation and therefore different kind of membership too. Moreover, there are some criteria that help us to define the concept of 'member'

In everyday language the concept of 'member' of a party coincides with that of adherent - in Europe at least. The latter is distinguished from 'supporter', who declares his agreement with the doctrines of the party and sometimes lends it his support but who remains outside its organisation and the community it forms; the supporter is not, properly speaking, a member of a party. (Duverger, 1964, p.62).

Duverger emphasises the difference between members/grassroots and 'supporter'. A supporter is not within the created organisation, the so-called party, but he/she stays on the periphery, agreeing with the party's fundamental principles but not enrolled or attending any kind of regular meeting or activity. If we look at some definitions of party member we see there is a pattern, which includes the most distinctive elements of party members. This is what we seek. According to David Berry (1970, pp. 31-32): "... party members are those who individually subscribe to a political party, hold a membership card, and presumably have their names recorded on membership lists." In his account a subscription to the party's membership list and holding a membership card are the most important elements membership. Scarrow points out that:

... A useful way to make this distinction party member as those whose relation to a party involves both obligations and privileges. Two of the most common obligations imposed by parties on their members are the injunction to refrain from joining rival parties, and the requirement to contribute to party funds. Common privileges include the right to participate in candidate selection, and the right to influence programmatic decisions. In some countries, parties also (or alternatively) offer their members special access to goods and services. (1996: p16).

Scarrow's definition of membership also draws a line between the supporter and the member of a party. For her we can only distinguish a member from the rest of 'the border of the universe of all party supporters' if they have both obligations and privileges within the party organisation. The most common obligations are that no party tolerates involvement of their members with rival parties and, financial

contribution from the grassroots level. She also points out privileges members may have. e.g. the right to take part in candidate selections and the right to influence various levels of decision making.

6.2.4.1 Members

Throughout our search to define members of a party a pattern has materialised. A member is a person (1) who is formally enrolled in a political party; (2) who shares and acts upon the ideology, programme or policies defined by the party; (3) who is constrained from joining or being involved with another, especially, a rival party; (4) who makes financial contributions to the party and; in return, (5) who enjoys privileges within and outside the party. These privileges vary from country to country and from party to party but they can include good opportunities for a political career as well as according to Scarrow special access to goods and services, which are mostly from public resources.

I have documented a pattern of party membership but we must also define the **activist member / grassroots activist** which is the focal point of this research. The definition of membership / grassroots is the first step in this process. The next step is how we can identify the concept of active members or grassroots activist.

In order to define the *grassroots activists* I will utilise the concept of *militant* as proposed and used by M. Duverger (see 1964: pp. 109-116) and Michaud (1975, p. 125) in the context of French Communist Party. Finally, Karl W. Deutsch (1970:48) 's definition of *political activists* will be explored.

6.2.4.2 Militant

There are strong similarities between the 'militants' that Duverger (1964:109-116) used in his classification of party membership and the 'grassroots activists' that are the subject of this study. Duverger (1964, p.110) argued that:

The militant is an active member: the militants from the nucleus of each of the party's basic groups, on which its fundamental activities depend. Within the branch, for example, there is always to be found a small circle of members, markedly different from the mass, who regularly attend meetings, share in the spreading of the party's slogans, help to organise its propaganda, and prepare its electoral campaigns. These militants constitute a kind of caucus within the branch. They are not to be

confused with the leaders: they are not directors but executives; without them it would not even be possible to carry out any activities.

What we should be looking at in Duverger's definition of militant is to see the differences between the ordinary members as he calls them the 'masses' and the active members he calls 'militants'. Clearly, the militants are fewer with more influence and activity within the branch. They regularly attend meetings and spread the party's ideology and slogans. They are vital for preparing and executing the election campaigns. Although, Duverger prefers the term 'militant' instead of 'active member', at the beginning of his definition, he admits that the militant is an active member.

Michaud's definition of militant is different than Duverger's. There is no strong ideological devotion in Duverger's concept of militant but Michaud's militants defined in the context of the French Communist Party are strongly bound with the Communist Party's ideology and organisational structure. He wrote, "The real strength of the party resides in its large number of devoted militants...and well trained and efficient local leaders" (1975, p.125). As his term militant is so much equated with the Communist Parties and our subject pro-Islamic Welfare/ Virtue party is far from being Communist, we should seek out some other definitions. Deutsch's definition of political activist seems more in line with the WP/VP's activists. He proposes six tests for identifying the political activist:

An activist is a person (1) who is member of a political organisation; (2) who gives money to a political organisation or candidate; (3) who frequently attends political meetings, whether of committees or of large groups; (4) who takes part in electoral campaigns; (5) who writes letters on political topics to legislators, political officeholders, and/ or the press; or (6) who talks about politics to people outside his immediate circle of family or friends (1970, p. 48).

He considers a political activist to be anyone who fulfils at least three of these six conditions. On the bases of his not so stringent tests, 3 percent of the population in most countries can be classified as political activists. The first two conditions, being a member of party and paying regular dues, are the same criteria for membership of party. But the rest of the conditions: frequent attendance of political meetings; taking part in electoral campaigns; writing letters on political issues to government officials or press and; talking about politics in public/ out side family and friend circle, are the conditions that constitute an activist.

If we compare the two concepts Duverger's 'militant' and Deutsch's 'political activist' we could see that there are some parallels and differences between the two. The parallels are regular attendance of meetings, taking part in the election campaigns, spreading the party's views, goals and slogans, writing letters and preparing electoral campaigns and the like, but the differences are equally important especially when applied to our case study: the grassroots activists of the Fazilet (Virtue) Party (VP) in Turkey. Duverger's definition of 'militant' is much more exclusive, and implies some clear-cut lines between member and active member. For example, his emphasis on the small number of people whose activities are fundamentally important for the party. In Deutsch's definition of active member there is no such fundamental role for a small number of people who are considered to be activists'.

6.2.4.3 Grassroots Activist

To solve the problem of conceptual definitions I adopt an eclectic approach. It seems both definitions, militant and political activist could be converged in to one. Although, Duverger's description of *militant* seems much closer to the VP's grassroots activists that I study. But, because the term 'militant' has negative connotations with the communist parties of the 1950s and especially its negative tone in Turkish politics I instead use terms like 'party activist', 'active party member' or 'grassroots activist'. I define the grassroots activist as (1) a person who is an active member of party; (2) who is in many respect different from the rest of the members; (3) who regularly attends political or informative party meetings; (4) who actively shares and actively advocates the party's ideology, policies and goals; (5) who actively engages all aspects of the electoral campaigns; (6) who has some sort of resources such as financial, political, ideological or cultural if not free time for party activities; (7) who has a strong ideological conviction, has better political knowledge, and devotion to the party leadership.

It can be said that grassroots activists are the core of the party organisations. They are the real fighters of the parties on the ground. They are the real people struggling to increase the scope of influence and hegemony of the party upon the non-member as well as to re-educate the members and carry the party into power. This is in order to

realise their own political agenda that is mostly more radical than the ordinary members'.

6.3 The Case of The Virtue Party and Its Grassroots Activists

Political rights and duties in general are drawn up by the Turkish Constitution (1982) section four. The rules concerning party formation, membership, and withdrawal from membership are outlined by article 68 and 69 of the Constitution and by the law of political parties panel code number 2892.²⁴⁴ Paragraph 11 of panel code 2802 specifies the conditions of becoming member of a political party. There are certain restrictions on who can be members and who cannot. Civil servants in the public sector and corporations, judges and prosecutors, members of higher judicial organs, member of armed forces and students are restricted from joining political parties or organisations.

From my observation and interviews with the grassroots activists in Keçiören and Mamak, in Ankara it can be said that the Virtue Party has been working very hard to acquire new members. Its predecessor Refah had over four million members before it was closed down. Now the VP aims to reach at least that number. Unfortunately since its foundation the VP has not declared its membership figures and my request from its head office was also fruitless, but I can estimate on the basis of information given by the administrators of both party branches. Before the elections on 18 April 1999, the as individual branches registered one third of the members that they had in the WP, so a rough estimate can put the membership around one and half million. Of course it is an estimate and may not be utterly accurate.

6.3.1 How to Become a Member of The VP

To become a member, first the candidate must fill in the membership form. This form contains three parts. Firstly the candidate declares that he fulfils the conditions set by the law of political parties, he/ she will observe the party's programme, rules and code

²⁴⁴See Dodd, C.H (1990:172-173), *The Crisis of Turkish Democracy*, The Eton Press

of conduct and will pay the membership dues for a year. Secondly they must provide demographic information: the neighbourhood, his/her name, surname, parents name,

Fazilet (Virtue) Party's Membership Application Form

FAZİLET PARTİSİ

Üye Giriş Beyannemesi

FAZİLET PARTİSİİLÇE BAŞKANLIĞI

2802 Sayılı Siyasi Partiler Kanunu'nun 11.maddesinde öngörülen Şartları taşıyorum. Partinizin tüzük, program ve içyönetmeliklerine uymayı kabul ve yıllık TL. Üyelik aidatını ödemeyi taahhüt ediyorum.

Üyeliğe Kabulümü rica ederim. Tarih:/...../..... İMZA

MAHALLESİ:.....

ADI SOYADI:.....

BABA VE ANA ADI

DOĞUM YERİ VE TARİHİ:

TAHSİL

DURUMU:.....

MESLEK VE SANATI:.....

İKAMETGAH ADRESİ:.....

EV ve İŞ TEL:

KAN GURUBU

İLÇE ÜYE SIRA NO.....

TAVSİYE EDENLER

Yukarıda ismi ve adresi yazılı Şahsı tanıdığımızı ve partimize üye kaydında bir mahsur bulunmadığını arz ederiz.

TAVSİYE EDEN ÜYENİN

EDEN ÜYENİN

ADI- SOYADI - İMZASI ADI- SOYADI - İMZASI

VIRTUE PARTY

Membership Form

VIRTUE PARTY DISTRICT ADMINISTRATOR

I fulfil the conditions of the paragraph 11 of panel code number 2802' to become member of a political party

I declare that will observe the party's program, rules and code of conducts and will pay the membership dues of ... TL a year.

I would like to be accepted as a member.

Date:...../...../..... Signature

NEIGHBOURHOOD:

NAME AND SURNAME:

PARENTS' NAMES:

BIRTH PLACE AND DATE:

EDUCATION:

OCCUPATION AND SKILLS:

HOME ADDRESS:

HOME AND WORK TEL:

BLOOD GROUP:

DISTRICT MEMBER NUMBER:

REFERENCES:

We declare that we know this applicant for membership and have not got any objection

REFEREE

REFEREE

NAME - SURNAME

NAME - SURNAME

AND SIGNATURE

AND SIGNATURE

birthplace and date, education, skills and occupation his residential address, telephone numbers. The third part consists of the referees' names and signatures. They also make a declaration, which says 'I know him/her and support his/her membership'.

I have witnessed several people filling in the application for membership. It takes about ten minutes to complete the form. The reference system does not work precisely as stated in the form but the administrative secretary asks who the referees are and usually they find someone whom both knows. They are issued with membership cards

with their photographs. Members are very keen to obtain their membership cards from the administrator and proudly display them. Some treasure and retain old cards issued by the Welfare Party before it was closed down. Membership fees are not always paid. In fact I have not seen anyone pay it there. In Turkey, political parties can, according to their share of the vote, get hefty sums of state funding therefore the membership dues are not really what parties financially rely on.

As argued in chapter 2, the Turkish party system has been experiencing a major impasse. They face an increased party fragmentation, electoral volatility and organisational decay. This process went hand in hand with increased party detachment, declining organisational capacity and party identification among citizens (Özbudun 2000, p. 73). Also, there has been a process of policy convergence between the centre-left and the centre-right parties caused by the process of globalisation and neoliberal restructuring policies.²⁴⁵ Hence they have been in desperate need of something different that separates them from others. In this context well-organised grassroots organisation and committed grassroots activists equipped with modern technology make a real difference. During my field work that coincided with the election campaign period in Turkey, I observed that compared to other centre right and centre left parties, (which I visited several times in their local party branches), the VP have far better grassroots organisation and far better election campaign strategies. The strategies, tactics and campaign methods used by the WP/VP during the first half of the 1990s became the 'new standard' of election campaigning. In contrast, throughout the 1980s and 1990s, very much with Özal's Motherland Party (MP) and many others the election campaigns were organised and executed in the American style; media led election campaigns using mass communication technology, increased use of opinion polling, PR expertise and the like.²⁴⁶ In the general elections of 1987 and 1991 the MP subcontracted its election campaign to a very famous American PR company, which carried out George Bush's presidential campaign. Other parties like the TTP either signed contracts or invited expensive expertise and consultants from abroad.

²⁴⁵ For a detailed account of the party decline and policy convergence in Turkey see Chapter 2.

²⁴⁶ For a debate on the effects of the grassroots party organisations on the electoral outcomes see chapter 7.

At the beginning of the 1980s the style of election campaigning changed. The resource-rich conservative parties rejected grassroots organisation and came to rely on clientelist ties, spin-doctors, hi-tech and high budget election campaigns. When the WP had made unforeseen success in 1994 and 95 elections this trend started to change. Many of mainstream political parties began picking up the methods developed and used by the WP.²⁴⁷

From our observation in the field, it was quite apparent that grassroots activists were putting up an extremely vibrant campaign throughout the period. It was observed that many grassroots activist were extremely generous with their time working long hours in the neighbourhoods. Some activists owned shops, groceries, warehouses, petrol stations etc., and in order to join the campaign, would either find someone to run the shop or close their shops altogether. Even some of those usually employed in the public sector, would use their annual holidays or get bogus sickness reports from the doctor through networking just to be able to join the campaign. These example show how committed the VP's grassroots activists are to their party activities.

6.4 The Socioeconomic Profile

'People who talk together vote together'²⁴⁸

6.4.1 The Social Environment: Sub-districts of Mamak and Keçiören

Before it became the capital city of the modern and secular Turkish republic, Ankara was a small, dusty Anatolian town at the beginning of twentieth century. Its good fortune came when the founding father of the new republic, Mustafa Kemal, chose this humble town as the capital city. From this historical moment as chosen location Ankara has had a massive, planned and deliberate transformation in every sense and direction.

Ankara started to grow as the only planned town reflecting the ambition of the new Kemalist elites to create a modern capital city with its wide streets, long boulevards,

²⁴⁷It has been several times reported that some of these mainstream parties adopting the VP's campaign model. See Milliyet 22 Ocak 1999 (daily Miliyet, 22, January 1999).

²⁴⁸ Miller, W. L (1977, p.65) Quoted in MacAllister, J et al., 2001, p. 42.

picturesque monuments, modern theatre and art buildings. Until it became exhausted by the influx of migrants from rural Anatolia, Ankara continued to grow as a planned city.

Ankara witnessed a rapid urbanization process from the 1940s and onwards. As all the governmental offices were concentrated there its development was driven predominantly by public sector employment mainly in office jobs and public and private services sectors. Although there has been growth in the industrial sector, its rate is relatively small compared to Istanbul and the rest of Marmara region. Keçiören and Mamak are both administrative districts of Ankara.

6.4.2 Sub-District of Keçiören

It can be argued that the type of housing (e.g. whether it consist of mainly gecekondu (squatter) housing, apartment blocks, luxury apartments or villas) in a neighbourhood is one of the main indicators of its socioeconomic conditions. In general terms, the location of a neighbourhood in a town or city is also an important indicator of its inhabitants' social and economic backgrounds. It is also one of the most significant variables influencing the political process.²⁴⁹

From the early 1950s onwards there has been a number of studies primarily concerned with the relationship between socioeconomic conditions and voting tendencies in Western Europe and Northern America.²⁵⁰ These studies focus particularly on the relationship between social environment, e.g. neighbourhood factors, and social and political participation. For example one of the earliest empirical studies of American voting behaviour concentrates on the social bases of American partisanship. This

²⁴⁹ For a recent debate about the neighbourhood effect on voting behaviour see MacAllister, I et al., (2001), "Class Dealignment and the Neighbourhood Effect: Miller Revisited" in *British Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 31, Part 1, (2001), pp. 41-59, see also Savage, M (1987) "Understanding Political Alignment in Contemporary Britain: Do Localities Matter?" in *Political Geography*, Vol. 6: (1987), pp. 53-76; Warde, A and Svage, M et al (1988), "Class, Consumption and Voting: An Ecological Analysis of Wards and Towns in the 1980 Local Elections in England", *Political Geography Quarterly*, Vol.7 (1988), pp. 339-351.

²⁵⁰ See Micheal, G et al (1982), "Political participation and neighbourhood Social Context Revisited in *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 26, No. 1, February 1982, pp.144-149; Kenny B. C (1992), "Political Participation and Effects from the Social Environment" in *American Journal of Political Science*, VOL/ 36, No. 1, February 1992, pp.259-267.

study found that "an *Index of Political Predisposition* based on social classes, religion, and rural/urban residence was a strong determinant of voting choice" (Dalton 1988, p.152). Similarly Bell and Boat's (1956-7) study, in San Francisco, shows that family and socioeconomic neighbourhood characteristics influence the development of informal group relations between friends, relatives, neighbours and co-workers'. Another similar study carried out by Berry (1970, p.34) in Britain, found that there was a strong correlation between socioeconomic class characteristics in a neighbourhood and voting behaviour

The concept of neighbourhood effect has been employed in electoral studies for a long time. (MacAllister, J et al, 2001) In my research I am particularly interested in the neighbourhoods effects on political participation and voting choices. The reason for this is that since the 1970s many scholars have rejected the effects of the class and socioeconomic status of neighbourhoods on the electoral process. However MacAllister, J et al (2001, p 59) pointed out that as recently as the last general elections (1997) in Britain there was strong evidence of such influence:

We have provided strong evidence of very significant differences in voting behaviour within each of the country's three main social classes at the 1997 general election according to the socioeconomic status of the area in which they lived. The lower the area's status- at a range of spatial scales including not only the constituency and ward but also bespoke neighbourhood varying from populations of 10.000 to less than 500- the greater the ratio of Labour: Conservative voting within each class. Geography clearly does matter.

It was observed, during my fieldwork in Ankara, that the party support was predominantly affected by the socioeconomic characteristics (income level, type of occupation, type of employment and level of formal education etc) of the neighbourhoods. In other words class cleavages which had not been credited much by some observers, still play a much more decisive role on voting preferences. We will not discuss this lengthy issue here but it seems that class cleavages and party support in Turkey are being neglected in favour of alternative approaches like 'the new political cleavage and new politics'.²⁵¹ We shall return to this point in later chapters and will focus on the socioeconomic parameters in Keçiören and Mamak.

²⁵¹ For an analysis of 'old politics' and 'new politics' see Dalton & Kuechler, 1990, *Challenging the Political Order*; Pakulski, J. 1991, *Social Movements*, pp. 25-51; Russell J. Dalton, 1988, *Citizen Politics in Western Democracies*, pp. 151-176.

Illustration 1: A Typical Middle Class Settlement from Keçiören Sub district



Illustration 2: A Typical Gecekondu Settlement in Keçiören Sub district



In terms of the type of housing both sub-districts are comprised of a large proportion of *gecekondus* (squatter) settlements.²⁵² This means both districts are home for thousands of poor, lower and lower middle class residents. Mamak has a larger proportion of *gecekondus* dwellers than Keçiören.

As mentioned in chapter 1 that more than half of (55 percent) Keçiören's population currently lives in the *gecekondus*. However there has been a steady change in the composition of Keçiören's population. There has been a continuing growth in its middle and upper middle classes which are composed of traditional bourgeois class like artisans, merchants, tradesmen, shop owners, contractors and so on. Also there has been a growing number of professionals like doctors, chemists, solicitors, public and private managers, etc., who have moved to Keçiören's more prestigious, richer neighbourhoods.

The ratio of *gecekondus* housing in comparison to the general population in Ankara is below the average (58.4 %) of Ankara (see Table 1.5). This is partly due to the growth of middle class area and also, partly rapid transformation of the *gecekondus* into authorised apartment blocks and the expansion of new settlement areas by the co-operatives in Keçiören district.

6.4.3 Sub district of Mamak

The second district I have chosen is Mamak where I have lived for two years between

²⁵² The term *Gecekondus*, translated as "Houses which land in the night", has been used to describe a type of housing which is hastily erected in a single night if possible with, usually, low quality materials, and they were grouped together for security reasons. Danielson and Keles, 1985 *The Politics of Rapid Urbanisation*, pp. 162-166.

1989 and 1992. Just after graduating from university I moved to Ankara to attend a Master degree in the department of Sociology at the Middle Eastern Technical University in Ankara. I settled in the Mamak, neighbourhood of Misket where my parents have a home. The majority of the neighbourhood however was poor, the housing and services were considerably low quality. The way people lived, the things they were concerned with the values they shared were also very different from Ankara proper. My interest in this district goes back to those years that I spent there. I was not surprised at all that on returning to the same neighbourhood for my field research, I saw very little change. The neighbourhood looked the same, except for a few roads being broadened and improved, but the rest had stayed as it was ten years previously. Neither has things improved for the inhabitants. They have still got the same concerns and worries about the next day's bread.

As mentioned earlier the county of Mamak is the one of the poorest of all administrative districts of Ankara. Compared to the wealthier districts (e.g. Çankaya) Mamak has all of the socioeconomic characteristics of the Third World cities. Some of its neighbourhoods are very poor the housing conditions are inadequate, income per family is very low and unemployment is higher than the national average.

The quality of housing visibly worsens in these neighbourhoods on the outskirts of the district. High social deprivation, inadequate urban services, poorly maintained schools, substandard health services, a high rate of unemployment, low income and an unskilled labour force are the most common characteristics of these neighbourhoods on the outskirts of Mamak. In addition to these factors the integration of the gecekondu population to urban life is still a major problem and a major issue that affects political cleavages and voting choices. The process of integration of the gecekondu masses into city life demands a lot more than simply time spent in the city.

Illustration 3: A Typical Gecekondu Settlement from Mamak Sub district



Illustration 4: A Typical Gecekondu from Mamak Sub district



The sub district of Mamak appears to be a predominantly gecekondu area. Although gecekondu (squatter) housing is found, by many students of urban studies, to be relatively high standard housing compared to its equivalents in many Asian and Latin-American cities, most gecekondu dwellings have considerable deficiencies. Lack of space and overcrowding is a common problem. Gecekondus average 2.6 people per room, compared with 2.1 for all urban housing (Danielson and Keleş 1985, p.167).

Only a few of Mamak's 63 neighbourhoods are non-gecekondu urban areas and occupied by traditional middle and new middle classes. These non gecekondu urban areas are mainly in central Mamak and developed alongside the main road called *Tip Fakultesi Caddesi*. Some of these non-gecekondu urban neighbourhoods are as follows: A. Pasa, Cebeci, Demirlibağçe, some parts of Türközü, and inner Tuzluçayır. The rest of Mamak sub district mainly consists of gecekondu (squatter) settlements. It seems to have at least 79 percent gecekondu housing. In Mamak there are 95000 houses in total and 75000 of them are classified as gecekondu.²⁵³

6.5 The Profile of Membership: Who Are They?

"All other parties have got members, but we have got believers in our party"

(N. Erbakan, the leader of the WP)

The rapid rise of the Islamist Welfare party in the middle of the 1990s was remarkable. Within a short time the WP became the biggest political party in Turkey.

²⁵⁴ I have pointed out time and again that the WP/VP owes its unprecedented rise to very well organised, effective party organisations established across the country and to its highly committed, hard working, very active militant grassroots activists.²⁵⁵

Now is the time to examine who are they really? Are they educated or uneducated, employed or unemployed, young, old, what do they do for a living, where do they live, where were they born, what is their social status etc? All those questions will be dealt within this section.

²⁵³ These figures were given by Gazi Sahin the candidate mayor (presently mayor of Mamak) of the Virtue Party during his interview for a local TV channel called *Kanal A*, 8 April 1999.

²⁵⁴ To prevent repetition reader may consult chapter 3 and 4 for a detailed account of the rise of political Islam in Turkey.

²⁵⁵ For more detail see chapters 1, 3 and especially 7.

Before I move on, a few words about the gender issue in my research. All the 42 informants whom I interviewed are male. Although I have made some observations and had occasional contact with members of the VP's *hanim komisyonlari* (ladies commissions) I have had formal interviews with only male party activists. There are a few reasons for this. First of all despite the fact that the *hanim komisyonlari* within the WP/ VP have been often acknowledged for their important contribution in vote canvassing, they usually remain inactive once elections are held. While they deserve this acknowledgement for their impressive role in terms of door-to-door vote canvassing grassroots activism needs consistency and long-term commitment. Secondly, whatever their contribution may be, ladies tend to not take the full initiative but rely on directives and advice from district branches via neighbourhood organisations, which are totally dominated by the male activists. The third reason was entirely based on concerns with the logistical problems of fieldwork. Given the boundaries of gender relations in this particular group and especially being an outsider, at least at the beginning, I anticipated some problems regarding accessibility for observation and undertaking interviews. I decided therefore to concentrate on the mainstream grassroots activist population because woman party members constitute only 4 percent of the total party membership in Turkey.²⁵⁶ Therefore I decided to concentrate on the dominant mainstream grassroots activists of the VP.²⁵⁷

In the following section I aim to profile the socioeconomic and demographic characteristics of the VP's grassroots activists. The reason for this is first of all to find out who the activists are, what sorts of social background they come from, their social status, age, income level, education and occupational background, marital status and like. Finally I intend to uncover the dominant socioeconomic characteristics of the VP's activists and compare these social variables with the socioeconomic status model developed by Verba and Nie 1972, chapter 8; Verba, Nie and Kim, 1978 and used by many others like Dalton, 1988; Marsh, 1990; Milbrath and Goel 1977. It was argued (Verba, Nie and Kim 1978, p.63) that there is a strong relationship between

²⁵⁶ See TESEV 2000, p. 23.

²⁵⁷ Having said that, this is definitely not an attempt to deny or underestimate the existence and importance of *hanimlar komisyonu* (women's committees) within the grassroots organisation but we must note that grassroots activism predominantly is still a male vocation.

socioeconomic status and political participation. "Individuals with higher levels of education and higher levels of income will be more active in politics." (Verba et al 1978, p.64). Dalton (1988, p. 49) stresses the role of social status as the main stimulant to participation. Social characteristics strongly correlated to political participation are age, education, gender, socioeconomic status, type of residency, strength of party identification, sense of political efficacy and policy dissatisfaction (Dalton, 1988, pp.49-50; Dows and Hughes, 1986, pp.272-273; Marsh, 1990).

6.5.1 Place of Birth and Type of Residency

First of all I asked where my informants were born. Table 6.1 shows that less than a quarter (24 %) was born in Ankara, the vast majority (76 %) being migrants from rural Anatolia.

Table: 6.1 where were you born?

PLACE OF BIRTH	NUMBERS	PERCENTAGE
Ankara	10	24
Elsewhere	32	76
Total	42	100

Source: Field Survey in Mamak and Keçiören Districts-Ankara

Although I did not have any questions about family history, it is most probable that informants born in Ankara are the sons of first or second-generation immigrants who migrated to Ankara when it was thriving in the 1950s. The majority of our informants (76 percent) themselves migrated at a relatively early age for a better life in Turkey's fast growing urban centres. As in many other developing countries Turkey was transformed by the rapid urbanisation, which took place from the early 1950s. We must bear in mind that during the early 1990s the WP/VP became an urban-based political party. A nationwide recent election study found out that 58 percent of those who would be voting- if the election were held today- for the VP live in the urban areas compared to 42 percent in the rural areas (See TÜSES 1999, p.109).

How long have the grassroots activists been in Ankara?

Table: 6.2 The time spent in Ankara

PERIOD (Years)	NUMBER	PERCENT
0 - 5	0	0
6 -10	1	3
11 -15	3	9
16 -20	7	22
21 -30	10	31
31 -+	11	34
Total	32	100

Source: Field survey in Mamak and Keçiören-Ankara

Some 87 percent of grassroots activists have been living in Ankara for more than 16 years. My data reveals a similar pattern between the time that our informants migrated to Ankara and the pattern of rapid urbanization that took place since the 1950s. More than one third (34 percent) of the VP's grassroots activists have been living in Ankara for more than 31 years and must have migrated to Ankara with the first wave of rapid migration. Another 31 percent migrated between 21 and 30 years ago while less than a quarter 22 percent settled in Ankara between 16 and 20 years ago. Around 9 percent migrated between 11-15 years ago and only 3 percent came to Ankara 6- 10 years ago.

How can we interpret this data relating length of domicile in the city and becoming a political activist? It looks as if there is a pattern. Our data suggests that the longer the time spent in the city the more likely one is to participate in politics and become a political activist. More than two third (66 percent) of our informants said that they have been living in Ankara for at least 21 years. As it was argued in chapter 4 in detail that there are strong correlates between political participation and urbanisation in general and urban residence and time spent in urban areas in particular. Berry (1970, p.34), Danielson and Keleş (1985, pp.100-102), Deutsch (1963) and Lerner (1958, p. 46) all agreed that urbanisation combined with other features of social mobilisation would increase interaction and political communication from citizen to citizen and citizens to state.

6.5.2 Marital Status

Marital status is another social variable that plays a significant role as a predictor of political participation and voting behaviour. Like age and political participation, marital status is a variable classified as 'Life Cycle and Participation' (Verba and Nie, 1972, p.139). As Yücekök (1997, p.69) suggested there is a relation between the ethnicity and marital status of an individual. Those sub-ethnic/religious groups who described themselves as 'Muslims' and 'Kurds' have a much higher ratio of marriage than those who described themselves as 'Turks' and 'Turk-Kurds'. As shown in table 6.3 the majority (81 percent) of my informants are married. Less than 20 percent (19 %) are single or widowed. Only a small minority (11 %) are unmarried/ single, the other 7 percent being widowed.

Table: 6.3 Marital Status

MARITAL STATUS	NUMBER	PERCENT
Single	5	12
Married	34	81
Widow	3	7
Divorced	0	0
Other/cohabit	0	0
Total	42	100

Source: Same as above.

It is true that different ethnic or religious groups give different priorities. For example, in Istanbul among other sub-groups those who defined themselves as Muslim and Kurdish have a high ratio of marriage. At present 80 percent of 'Kurds' and 76 percent of 'Muslim' are married while this ratio is 72 percent for 'Turkish' group and 73 percent within the population as a whole. In this study he found that 13 percent of the population are single and the remaining 11 percent is widowed or divorced.²⁵⁸

Since the 1970s politics evolved from 'party centred' to 'candidate centered' politics personality became an important factor.²⁵⁹ Marital status in this context counts a great deal. In general being married, having a decent and happy family life makes for good photo opportunities for media consumption. Regardless of the country; continent;

²⁵⁸See Ahmet Yücekök (1997: p.69), *Dinin Siyasallaşması*, AFA Yayıncılık,
¹⁹ See Crotty and Jacobson 1971.

poor or rich; the culture; the religion; family values and family ties are considered the fundamental core of the society. Thus given a universally recognisable value and high priority.

6.5.3 The Family

In this stage we have no clear, sign of the relationship between marital status and its function in politics. Over 80 percent of our informants (active members of the VP) are married but there are many factors that play a role in this matter. Being married with a family can be highly valued for a candidate of an important seat but people do not get married because they are in politics. There are traditional, cultural norms and religious factors as well. It has been suggested that those who are married are more likely to take political action than single persons.

The size of family and the number of children of our informant group is also another social variable closely related to political participation. The size of average households of our informant group is 5.07. As parents comprise 2 per household, the average number of children is 3.07 for our group. The size of the average household, in Turkey, is 4.97 in total, 4.33 in district centres and 5.75 in the sub-districts and villages (in 1990).

Table: 6.4 Number of children?

NUMBER OF CHILDREN	NUMBERS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
1	2	2	7
2	9	18	33
3	6	18	22
4	5	20	19
5 and +	5	35	19
Unanswered	10	-	27
Total	37		100

Source: Same as above

In Ankara the size of the average household is 4.23 in total, 4.08 in the province centre, 4.51 in districts and 5.22 in the sub-district and villages. It was observed that 33 percent of our informants have 2 children per household, which is below the

national average of 2.97 children in 1990.²⁶⁰ Less than a quarter (22 percent) has got 3 children. 18 % have 4 children and the other 18 % have 5 and more children. Only 7 percent of our informant had only have 1 child (See table 6.4). However on the whole It appears that in terms of the average number of children, our informants have (3.07 children/per household) 0.84 more children per household compared to average 2.08-children/per households in Ankara. This may be affected by their religiosity and because they are members of the Islamic Virtue party and their religiosity may have an impact on the number of children they have.

6.5.4 Educational Qualification

In this section, I will analyse the pattern of educational qualifications of our informants and its possible implications for the party preferences. The educational background of our informant group is a rather interesting one. From this figure we can say that our informant group is highly educated. More than one-third (38 percent) have attained a high school education, a ratio three times higher than in Ankara (11.59 percent) and four times that of Turkey as a whole. There are no illiterates among them and only a very small percentage (2.38 percent) has no diploma. More than one-fifth (21.24 percent) of them have a primary education. 19 percent have an elementary/ high junior education and almost one in ten (9.25 percent) have a university or equivalent degree. The rate of university graduates among them is twice the rate in general in Turkey (see Table, 4).

The ratio of illiteracy and literate without a diploma (literate without a diploma 3.38 percent) is so small compared to 18 percent in Ankara and 21 percent of the national population. Those with only primary education are only 21 percent compare to 44 percent in Ankara and 52 percent of whole male population. In contrast, 19 percent attended junior high school / elementary schools compared to 12 percent in Ankara and 11 percent of the male population in Turkey as a whole.

If we break down this data about the type of school attended, we will see a very

²⁶⁰ See 1990 Census of Population, p.179. State Institute of Statistics, Printing Division, October 1993, Ankara.

important aspect of the schooling among our informants.

Table: 6.5 Distribution of educational level in the Survey districts, compared with Ankara, and with Turkey as a whole.

Highest Educational Qualification	Keçiören and Mamak		Ankara *	Turkey **
	N	%	%	%
Illiterate	0	0	5.29	11.18
Literate without a diploma	1	2.38	12.83	10.27
Primary School	9	21.24	44.15	52.26
Elementary/ Secondary (in total)	8	19.04	12.42	10.84
(a) <i>İmam- Hatip</i> (Religious- prayer-leader and preachers)	4	(50.00)	-	-
High School (in total) :	16	38.09	11.59	10.74
(a) Modern/ non vocational	8	50.00	-	-
b) Technical/Vocational	4	25.00	4.34	-
c) <i>İH</i> (Religious High: prayer-leader and preachers)	4	(25.00)	-	-
University	4	9.25	9.25	4.75
Total	42	100.00	100.00	100.00

Source: Data collected during the fieldwork in Ankara

* Drawn from 1990 Census of population, pp.-89

** See 1990 Census of population, pp. 12-13.

As our informant group consisted of male grassroots activists we have chosen the male side of the column.

Half of these who attended junior high/elementary school, and 25 percent of those high school degree holders graduated from religious *İH* schools. This is very significant in terms of formal education and political preferences.

The positive relationship between education and political participation has been observed in many studies since the 1950s (See Dalton, 1988; Dowse and Hughes 1986; Lerner, 1964) Educational background is among the many variables, which influence both political participation and the partisan preferences (Dalton, 1988, pp.

35-57). The type and the duration of formal education is very influential upon the political process. In his study of "Elections and Party Preferences in Turkey", Kalaycioglu, (1994, pp.402-425) examined the critical role of formal education in determining party preferences. He argued that education is important in determining one's political allegiance to the values of the centre or periphery.

Those who attended secular schools for longer tend to support the parties of the centre (or the SDPP or DLP); those who do not attend secular schools do not tend to support the parties of the centre. In fact, he argues, secular education is negatively correlated with religiosity (Ibid, pp. 419-420).

Further evidence shows, at the end of the 1990s, that 'centre-periphery value orientation, formal education and ethnicity emerged as the most important independent variables with the highest predictive capability in determining party preferences in Turkey' (Kalaycioglu (1998, p.10). In Turkey İH schools have been at the centre of a long running controversial debate on the role and the possible impacts of İH schools on the rising Islamic movement.

Since the 1980s there has been an explosion of religious *İmam Hatip* (İH) (prayer-leader and preachers) ²⁶¹ schools and Koran courses. Although, those schools were opened with a limited purpose to produce religious functionaries: *İmams* (prayer-leaders) and *Hatipes* (preachers) for community needs, since the 1960s they have transformed into an alternative mainstream education system (Akşit 1994, p.147). ²⁶² The number of İH Schools and students went on rising during the 1990s and by 1995-1996 the number of İHs had risen to 561 and the number of students to 492,809.

²⁶¹ Since the 1960s İH schools have been causing great controversial debate among the Turkish scholars. Although originally they were set up to produce religious functionaries like imams, hatips, later the number of schools and students mushroomed. And as it grew in numbers it has grown in influence in politics too. There has been a growing body of literature on these schools. For some of them see: Akşit, B(1994, pp. 145-171 "Islamic Education in Turkey" in (Ed) Taper, R, *Islam in Modern Turkey*, 1994, I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, London. Ayata, S "The Rise of Islamic Fundamentalism and Its Institutional Framework". in (Ed) Eralp, A. et. al, *The Political and Socioeconomic Transformation of Turkey*, Praeger, London; Lapidot, A (1995) *Islam and Nationalism: A Study of Contemporary Islamic Political Thought in Turkey*, Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of Durham.

²⁶² The number of İH schools, teachers and students has steadily increased. There were seven İH schools in the academic year 1951-52. By 1958 their number had increased 18, with 2,476 students. In 1987-88 academic year there were 376 middle-level and 341 lycee- (high school) level İH schools, with nearly 240,000 students. If we recall that in the 1985-86 academic year there were 4,400 official, secular, general middle-level schools and 1,206 high schools, with approximately 2.4 million students the ratio of İH schools' students within the official, general student population reached the level of one in ten (Akşit, 1994, p.147).

(Gökçe, 1996, p. 130). Thousands of these graduates from the İH schools instead of taking employment as prayer-leaders and preachers, went on to study at universities to become engineers, public administrators, doctors, teachers, lawyers etc. How right or accurate to view those schools as anti-secular?

There has been a great deal of conflicting argument and confusion. Some would argue that since they are run and maintained by the Ministry of Education and above all their curriculum is prepared by the ministry they could not become an institution where anti-secular, anti establishment ideas are harboured. For them those are the schools where students learnt their religion alongside modern science and literature as well as the principles of Atatürk. Others would condemn them for brain-washing new generations as young as 12 years old producing an anti-secular, anti-republic, fundamentalist population to become the 'vote basket' of the right wing parties. For many, since the 1950s, these schools have been the backyard of the conservative right wing parties.²⁶³ Those claims especially focused on the supposedly organic connection between the pro-Islamist WP and the İmam-Hatip Lycées. Many media report observed strong association between successive pro-Islamist parties namely the National Salvation Party (NSP) in the 1970s, the WP from 1983 to 1998 and later the VP and the İH schools. However these claims are no more than media reports and needs to be sociologically investigated.

We do not have sufficient empirical evidence to support either of these opinions apart from a few existing studies. For instance Akşit (1994) observed the 'fathers of İmam - Hatip school students are overwhelmingly rural farmers, farm workers, urban small traders, craftsmen and civil servants. Most of them articulate conservative and traditional attitudes towards gender roles and relationships'. A quarter of them accepted that 'women should be educated' and 'must work', but only 8 percent accepted that 'women can travel alone'. More than half (60 percent) do not believe that modern science can solve all the problems we face but, interestingly the other 40 percent state greater faith in science. Yet, only one in ten agree that there can be a good man without religious faith' (Akşit 1994, pp.150-151). The socioeconomic background of these students indicates traditional rural, small traders and craftsmen

²⁶³ See Erbil Tuşalp, (1994, pp. 54-55) *Şeriat A.Ş. (Sharia Co.)*, Bilgi Yayınevi, Ankara

the petit-bourgeoisie from precisely where the pro-Islamist NSP the predecessor of the WP used to derive its electoral support. Although the social basis of the WP/VP has changed since the 1980s, these strata still support the pro-Islamist WP/VP.

The data shows that nearly one fifth of my informants (19 percent) attended Imam-Hatip schools. This finding can be interpreted, as the Imam-Hatip schooling an important independent variable that has considerable influence on my informants' political preferences and their decisions to become political activists. It can be said that among many influences education is one of the most important determinants of political participation.²⁶⁴ Age of an individual is also widely accepted as an influence on political participation. Many students of political participation pointed out a close relationship between the age of the citizen and the likelihood of their political participation.²⁶⁵

Most studies of political participation have found a distinctive curve of participation associated with age or what preferred to call is the stage of life of the citizen.

6.5.5 Age

It has long been suggested that there is a close relationship between age and citizen's commitment to the degree of participation. Many studies of political participation have found a distinctive curve of participation related to age or what Verba and Nie calls 'position in the life cycle' (Verba and Nie, 1972 pp. 138-139). They argued that political participation is low in the early and late years of the citizen. It starts to raise slowly from the age of 20, reaches its peaks in the middle of the age of 40s than declines from the age of 50s (ibid, pp.138-139).

From our point of view one of the most important findings in this study is that the average age of my informants is 42.83 years old that is very similar with Verba and Nie's (1972, p.139) findings. They found out that the peak years of a citizen's political participation in the 'Life Cycle and Participation' is in his/her mid 40s.

²⁶⁴ See Dalton 1988, p. 50.

²⁶⁵ See for example Verba and Nie, 1972; Marsh A, 1990.

Table: 6.6 how old are they?

AGE GROUP	(N)	PERCENT
25 and under	4	10
26-35	10	24
36-45	9	21
46-55	13	31
56-65	2	5
66 and over	4	10
Total	42	100

Source: Fieldwork

The maximum participation occurs when citizens in their 40s and 50s. Comparing with Verba and Nie's (1972) finding my data displays a similar pattern with an average age of 42.83 years old.

It appears that over three quarter of my (76 percent) informants are aged between 26 and 55 years old. Less than 10 percent are 25 and under; while one-quarter (24 percent) are aged between 26 and 35. More than one-in-five (21.42 percent) are aged between 36 and 45. The largest single group that constituting one-third (31 percent) of our informants are aged between 46 and 55 years old.

The average age of my informants is 42.83 years old, within the same age group that Verba and Nie (1972) pointed out when individual's political activity reaches its peak. From this perspective my finding confirms Verba and Nie's (1972) finding and shows that the pattern has not changed since then. What is more it shows that despite the contrary arguments there are many similarities between political activists in the West and Islamist political activists in Turkey.

6.5.6 Occupational Characteristics

Occupation as a person's regular work or profession²⁶⁶ is one of the main pillars of the social status of an individual. In the main time social status is a primary factor that influences a citizen's decision to participate (See Dalton, 1988, p.50). The relationship between social status and political participation have been one of the most commonly studied aspects of the politics (See Barnes and Kaase, 1979; Marsh, 1990; Milbrath

²⁶⁶ Collins, 1992, p. 1037.

and Goel, 1977; Verba and Nie, 1972). In their famous study Verba and Nie (1972, p.130) developed a model called socioeconomic standard model (SES) and found out that

“The relationship between socio-economic status and overall participation is linear and fairly strong. Those in the lowest sixth of the socio-economic scale have an average score of -46 on the overall participation scale; those in the top sixth have a score of 66.”

Table: 6.7 A Comparison of the occupational distribution of activists with the Turkish population nationally.

Activists' Occupations ²⁶⁷	District	District	Frequ ency	Per cent (%)	Turkey as a whole**	
	of Mamak	of Keçiören			Total (N=819)	Per cent (%)
Blue Collar Worker	7	6	13	30.95	313	17.4
Routine White Collar Worker	5	0	5	11.90	97	5.4
Shopkeepers & Artisans	3	4	7	16.66	314	17.4
Employers (Public & Privat Managers)	1	2	3	7.14	13	0.7
Self-Employed (Self-employed Professio: Doctors, Advocates)	2	4	6	14.28	23	1.3
Retired (from Public & Private)	5	1	6	14.28	na	na
Others(Unemployed, Students)	1	1	2	4.76	59	3.3
Total	24	18	42	100	819	***

Source: Fieldwork,

* I am using, with some modification, the occupational classification used by TÜSES 1999:47; 170-171.

** TÜSES 1999, p. 47. This nationwide study represents the entire electorate.

*** Two groups; Small Farmers (n= 498; %= 27.7) and Housewives (n=483; %= 26.8), are excluded from the table. So the total percentage is less than 100.

In the previous chapter, especially under the heading of Socio- Economic Conditions

²⁶⁷ 1) Blue Collar Worker 2) Routine White Collar worker (Office jobs + Teachers, Nurses) 3) Shop Keepers & Artisans (works for their own) 4) Employers (Non agricultural private managers) 5) Self Employed (Self employed professionals, solicitors, doctors, chemists, financial consultants. etc..) 6) Retired (from public and private sectors) 7) Others (unemployed, students, unspecified, etc..).

and Changing Voting Patterns in Gecekondus (See p.32) I argued the importance of socioeconomic conditions in relation to partisan preferences. Now, without delving into the theoretical complexity between occupation and political participation, I aim to examine the occupational pattern of our informant group.

More than one-third of (31 percent) our informants are blue collar workers, while 12 percent are classified as routine white collar workers including office clerical workers as well as low ranking civil servants, teachers etc. The second largest bloc (16.66 percent) is shopkeepers and artisans. It is not surprising that this group is the second largest of the VP's grassroots activists, because shopkeepers and artisans; the petit bourgeoisie due to its class position has always supported the religious right since the days of the NSP in the 1970s. A recent study confirms that the shopkeepers and artisans share first rank with small farmers in terms of supporting the pro-Islamist WP/VP. Both groups extend 16 percent of their vote to the WP/ VP. (See TÜSES 1999, p.115). The self employed (professionals, advocates, doctors, financial consultants and the like) and retired workers' groups constitutes the next largest (both with 14.28 percent) of party activists. Routine white-collar workers constitute 12 percent of our informants while employers constitute 7 percent of grassroots activists. The only small category (4.76 percent) is that classified as others including students, unemployed and unspecified groups.

The only way of making sense of the statistical data is to compare it with others available. To have a wider picture, or avoid not being able to see the wood for the trees I have compared my findings with the statistics concerning the male population in Ankara (1990) ²⁶⁸ and a nationwide study by TÜSES (1999) that concerns particularly the voters, political party affiliation and social structure in Turkey. When compared to the occupational pattern of my informant group with the TÜSES (1999, p.47)'s findings it appears that the ratio of blue-collar workers (31 percent) among my informants is almost two times higher that of the national average of 17.4 percent. This is true for routine white-collar workers (11.90% among my informants and 5.4 % national average) too. The ratio of shopkeepers and artisans is in line with the national average (17.4 %) though it is a little bit lower among my informants (16.66 %). The

²⁶⁸ For Population by gender and occupation in Ankara see the web page www.die.gov.tr/TURKISH/ISTATIS/ESG1/06ANKARA/nufus4.html

ratio of employers, public and private managers is 7 percent among our informants while it is less than 1 percent within the general population.

However, when we compare the occupational pattern of our group with the population by gender and occupation in Ankara it appears that, in general, our findings are much more in line with occupational pattern in Ankara. (See Table 6.8) For example the ratio (31 percent) of blue-collar workers is 2 percent less among our informants than in Ankara (33 percent).

Table: 6.8 Comparing the Occupational pattern

Occupations	Districts of Keçiören & Mamak		Turkey as a whole*		Ankara **
	Total (N)	Per cent (%)	Total (N)	Percent (%)	Percent (%)
Blue Collar Worker	13	30.95	313	17.4	33.32
Routine White Collar Worker	5	11.90	97	5.4	15.01
Shopkeepers & Artisans	7	16.66	314	17.4	6.02
Employers (Public & Private Managers)	3	7.14	13	0.7	1.22
Self-Employed (Self-employed Professional, doctors, advocates)	6	14.28	23	1.3	11.53
Retired (from public & private)	6	14.28	na	na	na
Others (Unemployed, students)	2	4.76	59	3.3	22.82
Total	42	100	819	100	90***

Source: As table: 6.7

* TÜSES 1999s Findings of the occupational percentage in Turkey as a whole.

** Occupation percentage in Ankara (Male population). Data drawn from 'population by gender and occupation in Ankara (in 1990)' see the web page www.die.gov.tr/TURKISH/ISTATIS/ESG1/06ANKARA/nufus4.html

*** the occupational group of agriculture, fishing, hunting and forestry comprising 10 percent of occupations in Ankara is excluded.

The ratio (12 percent) of routine white-collar workers is smaller compared to (15 percent) in Ankara. One of the biggest differences between the two sets of data is that

of shop ownership. An average of 17 percent of our informants are shopkeepers and artisans compared to only 6 percent of Ankaralis. As the difference is big (11 percent) we may argue that there seems to be a positive correlation between grassroots activism and shop keeping in Ankara.

As mentioned earlier the shopkeepers and artisans among those groups who have largely supported pro-Islamist WP/VP party. Another similar study found that 29 percent of the 'party workers' –it consists of all major Turkish parties- across Turkey are artisans and shopkeepers. This ratio is over 50 percent when tradesmen are included among them included. (TESEV 2000, p.22). Again there are more self employed (14.28 percent) individuals among our group than in Ankara as a whole (11.53 percent).

Table: 6.8 shows that our informant group has a higher than average ratio in Ankara in two groups: the shopkeepers, artisans and self employed professionals. One-third of our informants (31 percent) are shopkeepers, artisans or self-employed individuals compared to 17.55 percent in Ankara. Undoubtedly these two types of occupation are very different from blue collar or routine white-collar workers in terms of available time, income, social status and therefore social influence. We must emphasise that because one-third of our informant group has a relatively higher earner high status occupation they must be resource rich activists. Now we shall move on to the next variable the level of income among our informant group.

6.5.7 Income Level

One of the most common explanations, for political activism focuses on the importance of social status as a stimulus to political participation. By its nature politics requires a certain level of activity in order to stay informed and to understand the complexity of the political process. So the first step for participation is whether one's social status matches these requirements. It is assumed that higher-status

Table: 6.9 Distribution of household income by quintiles (annual) (in 1994)

Groups	<u>Total</u> Average Income		<u>Urban</u> Average Income		<u>Rural</u> Average Income	
	(%)	TL (000)	(%)	TL(000)	(%)	TL (000)
First 20 %	5.24	964.	5.43	1 126.	5.21	824.
Second 20 %	9.61	1 768.	9.33	1 934.	10.03	1 586.
Third 20 %	14.06	2 588.	13.60	2 819.	14.98	2 370.
Fourth 20 %	21.15	3 892.	20.71	4 294.	21.97	7 565.
Fifth 20 %	49.94	9 189.	50.93.	10 559.	47.82	7 565.

Source: 1994 Statistical Yearbook of Turkey, p.284.

citizens are more likely to have the necessary resources such as more money, time, easy access to political information, and the knowledge and ability to become politically involved (see Dalton 1988, p. 49; Di Palma 1970, p.3 ; Verba 1972 , pp.125-137). It is assumed that high-status; high-income level and higher education plays a vital role in the political participation. In terms of income distribution there is a big gulf between rich and the poor. The distribution of household income by quintiles clearly shows how income distribution is unequal.

Table 6.9 shows a disturbing income polarisation between the poor and the richer sections of the urban population. The richest 20 percent earns as much as ten times that of the poorest 20 % of household in Turkey. While the richest 20 % receive the 50 percent of all income the poorest 20 % get just 5.43 percent of total income. The second 20 quintile does not do much better either. It gets less than ten (10 %) percent of the income. The third quintile earns only 14 percent of total income, whereas the top two quintiles enjoy 70 percent of income. If we return to our case the occupational pattern and income figures from our fieldwork, the data will inevitably reflect the general picture.

As table 6.8 shows my informant group seems to have higher social status through occupation. Compared to Turkey in general and specifically in Ankara my informant group hold more prestigious occupations. Of course it is much more difficult to outline a comprehensive income index. This has been made almost impossible by the last two decades of high inflation. To make calculations on the basis of Turkish Lira would not be helpful at all since its value changes continually.

Table: 6.10 Monthly Earnings (000,000 TL)

AMOUNT OF EARNING PER MONTHS (TL MILLION)	SUN-DISTRICTS		FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
	KEÇİÖREN	MAMAK		
Less 70	1	3	4	10
71-100	4	5	9	21
101-150	7	9	16	38
151-200	3	4	7	17
201-250	1	3	4	10
300 +	2	0	2	5
Total	18	24	42	100

Source: Fieldwork

However in order to make sense of our data we will give some estimations on income levels. One of the main problems with studies on Turkey is the complexity of extracting economical data, made more difficult by major differences between the regions, cities and above all between the neighbourhoods.

Ten percent of my informants earn 70,000,000 Turkish Liras or less in a month, which works out at \$184 or £115 p/m. This amount is equivalent to the national minimum wage (68,000,000 TL) of an adult (over 16 years old) in 1999 and 109,000,000 TL from January 2000. We should keep in mind that the rate of the minimum wage is determined by a committee of employers, employees and the Ministry of Employment and Social Security and is applied in the formal private sector. It also reflects the wage rate in the public sector and a large proportion of state employees fall in a similar wage band.

The next poorest fifth (21 percent) of my informants earn between 71 to 100 million

TL. (\$185.5 to \$262) in a month.²⁶⁹ The largest group which consists of more than one-third (38 percent) of our informants earns 101 to 150 million TL (\$265- \$525) a month. The third largest group (17 percent) earns between 151 to 200 million TL equivalent to \$396 to \$521. The top earners in our table are the small (5 percent) number of people who earn 300 million (\$787) and more in a month. If we compare our group within itself the gap between the poorest earners and the richest is narrower (4.28 times) compared to 10 times the distribution of the national household income by quintiles annual in 1994 (see table 6.10). The median of the monthly income of my informant group is 140,717,000 TL per month, which is very close to the average earnings of 137,800,000 TL. However there is a clear difference in terms of average monthly income between those who live in Keçiören and Mamak sub-districts. The average earning of Kecioren group among my informants is 140,717,000 TL per month while the Mamak group earns 131,062,500 TL per month. In the main time the median income (140,000,000 TL) of the Keçiören group is very close to the average earnings (140,717,000 TL) of this group.

According to State Statistics Institute in Turkey the GDP per capita is \$3200 per annum. In Ankara this rate is \$3521.²⁷⁰ The arithmetic mean of the income (the average earnings) of our group is 137,800,000 TL per month. If we transform this into dollars it works out at \$4377 per year, higher than the GDP per capita in Ankara. It seems that there are parallels between my findings and the TESEV's (2000). They studied a sample of local party leaders and workers of five mainstream parties in 16 selected provincial capitals across Turkey. The average earnings in this group are 160.000.000 TL. (2000 p.23). It is higher than what my informants earn on average but this is to be expected since the TESEV's research was done on the party organisations in the district capitals among party workers -leaders and higher representatives- whereas my informants are from neighbourhood committees. Nevertheless, it shows that both groups earn more on average than ordinary people in Ankara. This confirms previous findings that suggest a positive correlation between

²⁶⁹ * The data collected during my fieldwork in Ankara between Februarys to May 1999. (\$1= 381 000 TL in 16 April 1999).

²⁷⁰ Milliyet 16 April 1999.

higher socioeconomic status- high-income level- and a high level of political participation. It appears my informants have got relatively high status, occupations and high income. Therefore, I can conclude as predicted that, this factor must have played an important role, in the case of our informant group, in the process of becoming political activists within the VP.

6.6 Conclusion

In this chapter we have tried to conceptualise the concepts that will be used throughout our research. First of all I have looked at the emergence and development of mass membership parties. That was necessary to grasp the concept of membership and grassroots activism. It was noted that from the 1960s mass membership parties started to decline in some Western European countries but this was not a universal trend. On the contrary, it was observed, in the Turkish case that it is other way around. Due to the high level of political participation during the 1990s the authorities became suspicious and tried to curb this rise in political participation. The closure of the Welfare Party - the predecessor of the VP- was a reflection of this concern among the secularist Turkish elites.

Why do parties need membership? We have argued that despite the trend in the mass party organisations membership still holds a key role within parties. In order to define the concept of grassroots activist I explored the concept of *militant* as defined and used by M. Duverger (see 1964: 100) and, Charles A. Micaud (1975: 125). Finally, I examined the concept of *political activists* suggested by Karl W. Deutsch (1970: 48). I have decided that Duverger's concept of *militant* and Deutsch's *political activists* could be used for our case study.

The second part of this chapter examined the socioeconomic and demographic characteristics of the Fazilet (Virtue) Party's grassroots activists. Our first goal was to see whether there is a consistent and coherent pattern among the active members of the VP. We have looked at the socioeconomic and demographic characteristics of our informants. For this we have examined social class, age, marital status, the length of time spent in the city/ urban area, educational background, and occupational classification and income levels. All these variables are compared against relevant groups with data from the State Statistic Institute's figures, other studies and sources.

In doing so we have found out important and consistent patterns among our informant group. Now we have a portrait of the pro-Islamist VP grassroots activists. For example 76 percent of them migrated at an early age to Ankara. More than 65 percent of them have been living in Ankara for at least 21 years. This is obviously evidence to support the arguments about the relationship between urbanization and the degree of political participation (see Di Palma 1970; Özbudun 1976). I have found that the vast majority (81 percent) of our informants are married with an average of 3.07 children. Both of these figures show a clear similarity with the finding of A. Yucekok (1997). In his study he classifies a group of people with Muslim identity among Istanbul residents. The similarities mostly occur in areas like marital status and family size.²⁷¹ In terms of educational qualifications our informant group is well above the average of Turkey and Ankara. There are no illiterates among them compared to Ankara (5.29) and 11 percent in Turkey as a whole. In general 65 percent of them received at least an elementary/ secondary and higher education. Another important point about our group that I wanted to emphasise is that 19 percent of them attended religious İH

²⁷¹ For details see Yücekök, A 1997.

schools at the higher junior and high school level.

The analysis of the findings on the educational characteristics of the VP's activists can be interpreted as: firstly the finding has supported the idea of 'participation is greater among the better educated' and secondly, the role of formal education in terms of party preferences. It seems that those who attended to religious İH schools tend to vote for and support the pro-Islamic parties like the VP. In fact the ratio of religious education is significantly high among my informants. Nearly one fifth (19 percent) of the WP/VP activists are graduates of İHs; half from high school and the other half from İH's junior sections. (see table 6.5). Having a religious educational background must have a significant influence on an individuals' decision to participate in politics, but it must also be very influential on his/her decision to become a political activist as well.

I have looked at age and political participation and found that the pattern of age for our grassroots activist group is identical with Verba and Nie's (1972) findings. The average age of our group is 42.83 years old. My data displays a very similar pattern with Verba's findings on 'life cycle and participation'. He found that in his 'participation scale' there is a peak point (age group 40-50) where people participate. (1972, pp.138-139).

In the case of occupational characteristics we found a distinct pattern of occupation in our group. For example compared to the average in Turkey the ratio of prestigious occupations such as employers (7 percent) and self-employed professionals (14 percent) is very high. One-third of our informants (31percent) are shopkeepers, artisans or self-employed individuals compared to 18 percent of Ankara's general population. Undoubtedly such relatively high status occupations will provide a higher income level.

The final finding of this chapter was the higher rate of average income among our

informant group. For our group the average income is 139.000.000 TL per month. In Ankara the average GDP per capita is \$3521 in a year. When we transform the average earning of 139 m TL into the US dollar (\$1= 381.000 TL in April 1999) it works out \$ 4377 per annum per grassroots activist. On the bases of these figures it is plausible to argue that our group is slightly better off-they appear to earn more in relation to their local community. As a result they have more resources in terms of more money, more free time, easy access to information about complex political issues and more knowledge to participate in the political process.

Finally, if we were going to summarise the portrait of a grassroots activist we could say that he is a migrant from rural Anatolia, arriving about 21 years ago, settled in a *gecekondu* neighbourhood most probably among his fellow villagers. He is 42.83 years old and married with 3.07 children. He attended at least elementary/ secondary school. His occupation is relatively high status compared to his neighbours and his earnings are higher than the average in the neighbourhood. He was most probably an active ex-member of the WP and joined the VP as soon as the WP closed down and is politically active. He regularly attends party meetings, actively engages, spreads the VP's ideology and slogans in his work place, tea houses, mosques, weddings, during regular visits to the neighbourhood's sick, elderly or bereaved.²⁷² He would talk politically sometimes implicitly but more often explicitly on political issues. He would practise his theological knowledge and relate reported incident from the prophet Mohammed's times, if possible, to support the ideas that he is raising. He reads the Milli Gazete the official daily of the VP, while having a strong ideological conviction with better political knowledge, and a devotion to the party leadership.

²⁷² See table: 8.1

CHAPTER SEVEN

NOT LIKE ANY OTHER PARTY

THE AFFECTS OF GRASSROOTS ACTIVISM ON THE ELECTORAL OUTCOME

As the British general elections approach the local parties are gearing themselves up to do their bit – and the evidence is that they do make an important contribution to turnout and party support. “A key to Labour’s landslide in 1997 was the revival of the grassroots party set in train by Tony Blair. From 1994 when he became leader until the 1997 general election, the grassroots party increased in size by about 40 %. Many of these new recruits helped to turn the Labour vote out on polling day”²⁷³

7.1 Introduction

‘Do grassroots party organisations make a difference in terms of increasing party’s electoral fortunes?’ In this chapter I am going to seek to answer this question. There are two competing approaches to the effects of the party organisations on the electoral turnout. The first one called, for the purpose of this chapter, the ‘the counter argument’ argues that the influence of the party organisations has been diminished. This group led by Butler and Kavanagh, 1992; Crotty and Jacobson, 1980; Herrnson, 1986 and Huckshorn, 1984. They argued that due to technological developments such as television, computers, mass communication technologies and the rise of new expertise groups -PR experts, campaign managers, pollsters, fund raisers etc., the local party organisations have lost their role as the means of election campaigning. However this approach is fiercely opposed by another group of students of the politics.

²⁷³ Whiteley, P and Seyd, P., (The Guardian, 27th March, 2001).

This approach will be called 'the pro-argument' which defends the party organisation effects on the electoral process. This approach is led by Crotty, 1971; Frendreis, P. et al 1990; Huckfeldt and Sprague, 1992; Seyd and Whitely 1992; Whiteley and Seyd 1994 and 1999. They say that despite developments in the party structure and the campaigning techniques the party campaigning makes a considerable contribution towards the parties' election results. For example Whiteley, P and Seyd, P (1998) explain the Labour party's landslide victory in 1997 on the basis of the Labour's hardworking grassroots activism. There is evidence showing that in many Western countries an active membership organisation is an asset for the party, and as the 1997 British general election has shown grassroots activism can make a very positive difference (see Whiteley, P and Seyd, P 1998). After discussing both approaches I will be moving to the case of the Virtue Party in Turkey.

At the beginning of my research I hypothesised that the rise of political Islam cannot be described simply as religious revivalism or Islamic fundamentalism. But, rather, there have been 'worldly reasons'-social problems- responsible for its popularity. As well as some socioeconomic reasons, the Virtue Party's well organised, militant like grassroots activism has been very influential on its increase of popularity and share of the vote in Turkey. To test this hypothesis I will be consulting my empirical data collected during my fieldwork in 1999 in Ankara. In the second half of this chapter I will be exploring the methods and techniques of the VP's grassroots activists. How often do they meet with the potential voters? Where do they usually meet with potential voters? What are their strength and weaknesses? What is distinct about them? What is distinct about their activities?

Also in this chapter the organisational structure of the VP will be briefly explained. I will give some details about the structure of the VP and its local branches. E.g. the neighbourhood executive committee, the leader of committee of the electoral affairs, propaganda, public relations, finance, political affairs and so on.

In short, in this chapter I am aiming to find out the role and effects of grassroots activism in connection with the unprecedented rise of political Islam in the mid-1990s If it happens that the local party campaigning has a positive effect and played a

significant role, then I will be asking how did the local party organisations contribute to the success of the WP?

7.2 Do Party Organisations Matter?

7.2.1 The Counter Argument

There is a sizeable body of literature on grassroots organisations and the effects of grassroots activism on party performance. Especially in relation to local campaigning: its effects on both increasing a party's share of the vote and voter turnout in general elections. However, not all students of electoral studies agree on the benefits of grassroots activities in this regard (See Butler, 1952; Butler and Kavanagh, 1992; Crotty and Jacobson, 1980; Kavanagh and Jones, 1998; Herrnson, 1986; Huckshorn, 1984: Chapter 5; Jones, B et al., 1998; Mair, 1994; Scarrow, 1996: Chapter 1). For many writers in this category the effect of local campaigning on electoral outcomes have been almost insignificant. In the meantime the majority of them acknowledge that in the past the party organisation has had greater impact on the electoral process but due to the developments in communication technologies and campaigning techniques party organisations have lost their importance as an exclusive means of campaigning.

For a long time, however, the influence of the party organisations was taken for granted by the majority of political science scholars. As political parties have been very important actors in Western democracies the fundamental questions were easily overlooked.²⁷⁴ That was until Anthony King made the charge that “most writers on parties note what they take the functions of the party to be, but they do not go on to ask whether parties actually perform these functions, and if so what to extent and under what conditions.”²⁷⁵

In the 1980s a number of scholars, such as Crotty and Jacobson (1980), Orren, G.R (1982), Abramson, J.B., Arterton, F.C., and Orren, G.R (1988) and many members of Harvard University's Campaigning Finance Study Group (1979) became alarmed by

²⁷⁴ See Scarrow, S (1996:10).

²⁷⁵ Quoted in Scarrow, S (1996: 10).

developments in the campaign politics. They suggested that the effects of the party organisations have declined sharply. Their concerns were especially focused on the diminished role of the parties in candidate recruitment, nomination and financial contribution. Also for them parties become less important in terms of providing information and advice in contemporary elections (Herrnson, 1986, p. 590).

Some of these studies were concerned with the technological changes that made the party organisations redundant. For example, Crotty, W and Jacobson, G (1980) did one of the earliest studies. Crotty and Jacobson observed:

The role of the political party in campaigns has given way to the technology of television-centred campaigns built on polls and run by the media and public relations experts. The evolving politics is a candidate centred, technocratic exercise in impersonal manipulation. (1980, p. 65).

Crotty and Jacobson emphasised the emergence of television technology and the new breed of PR expertise, which they say replaced the role of the party organisations in campaigning. In this fashion Huckshorn (1984, p. 130) suggested that:

... Since World War II, scientific developments such as television, computers, opinion polls, and other social and technological inventions have revolutionised mid-century office seeking. Except in some rural areas or in some local campaigns, one can no longer rely exclusively on speeches, rallies, and door-to-door campaigning, nor can one depended on party organisations for needed resources.

He adds:

New techniques in political campaigning have arisen because of profound changes in American politics; these changes have centred on weakened party structures and greater personalism. Traditional party organisation that were able (at least in some places) to mobilize voters and get them to the polls to "vote the ticket" have given way to a new form of politics based on the use of mass communications that reach the voters through electronic means. (Ibid: 133).

Here again technological and social inventions have been replacing the role of party organisation as the sole machinery of campaigning. In this study Huckshorn, R. J., (1984) makes a distinction between 'the old politics: meeting the voters' and 'new politics: reaching the voters'. His distinction is, obviously, based on how the voter is being mobilised and what techniques and technologies are being used. The new technologies mean the candidate does not need to meet the voters but can reach them

through electronic means. With a similar view Scott and Hrebener (1984, p. 1) point out that:

Parties have increasingly seen their major campaign services slip away one by one as historical eras and the nation's needs have changed. Party services have also been severely curtailed because of modern technology. Candidates are relying increasingly on the mass media, public opinion polls, and public relations experts instead of on the parties. The parties are thus being challenged by non-party political actors from the delivery of campaign services.

It appears that the observers in this category saw the technological innovations: developments in communication technology increased use of opinion polling, and computers paralleled with growth in expertise in public relations, statistical analysis, professional fund risers, campaign organisers and campaigners as making "traditional party organisations" irrelevant and outdated. As a result the role of party campaigning on electoral outcomes has diminished.

Similarly those who see no use for local campaigning see the decline in party membership as supportive evidence. Probably the most commonly mentioned reason is the developments in communication technology. TV, computers, facility of mailing systems increasingly enable leaders to get their message across to voters without the assistance of the party members and grassroots organisations. In other words development of new and faster communication technologies provide the tool that party leaders need for a direct contact with the voters (Scarrow, 1996, p. 6).

As well as technological and social innovations there have been other developments leading to the decline in importance of party organisations and their campaigns. These developments are diminishing party loyalty, single-issue politics the growth of other political activity and increasing costs of politics (see Crotty and Jacobson 1980: Chapters 1, 2). Some writers argue that while party campaigning is losing its importance politics is moving away from 'organisation centred' to 'candidate centred' politics. So campaigns have to be planned, organised, financed and executed by the candidate. Since one person's effort will not be nearly enough to fulfil what a meaningful campaign requires, the candidate will have to employ 'modern' campaign technologies, techniques and expertise. Also since the involvement of the party organisation is limited he has to raise money by himself. It has been argued that in

this new form of politics there is little place for 'traditional' style party organisations.
²⁷⁶ However we should keep in mind that the bulk of these changes have been taking place in the US. Also the impact of these changes has been different at different political levels.

Candidate-centred politics is more explanatory at the congressional level but it does not mean that it dominates in national elections as well (see Jacobson, 1997, p.5). One must remember that there are some fundamental differences between the American and the European political and party systems. This does not mean that I am underestimating the changes and developments, which affected political parties in Europe.

There are strong parallels regarding party organisation changes, the role and the assumed values of membership, decline of the membership parties and the decreased importance of effects of the party campaigning in Europe and the US. For example, Kavanagh and Jones (1998) observed similar problems in declining popular attachment, diminishing membership, deteriorating political and increasing non-political interests. They also noted the reluctance of interest groups to associate closely with political parties and parties' increasing need for relevant campaigning skills from outside their organisations (pp. 201-202). Consequently many argued that parties had lost their prime role as the medium of election campaigning. Naturally, the loss of the parties' role meant a diminished effect of local party campaigning on voting behaviour and voter turnout. Butler and Kavanagh saw no "evidence of great benefits being reaped by the increasingly sophisticated and computerised local campaigning" (1992, p.245 quoted in Whiteley and Seyd, 1999, p. 3). Similarly another important research body, the Nuffield election studies, have consistently questioned the benefits of local campaigning.²⁷⁷

From a different perspective Peter Riddell (1998, pp. 203-207) analysed the changes that political parties have undergone. He argued that the main functions of the parties changed from selecting and nurturing competing teams of political leaders to

²⁷⁶ For example see Crotty, W Jacobson, G 1980: 65; Jacobson, G., 1997; Scott, R and Hrebenar, R., 1979: Chapter 6; Wattenberg, M., 1991.

²⁷⁷ See Whiteley and Seyd, 1999: 2-3.

becoming a means to advance the careers and views of relatively small numbers of activists and full-time politicians. This is because the parties no longer represent the bulk of the middle and working classes that caused by the decline of class politics in general since the 1970s. He also dismisses the role of campaigning but not its effects, saying there is a tendency to overestimate the election campaign itself. Obviously, he adds, the intensity of the campaign can change a voter's choice, make someone change their view or think more politically but it is unclear whether the campaign itself is decisive in most cases as opposed to the events of the preceding four or five years.' (Riddell, 1998, p. 206). The first two points are related; the first is that the political parties have gone through tremendous changes, because their social/class bases have changed. The second point he raises is that campaigning can affect electoral outcomes; voting behaviour and voter turnout. The third point that he makes is that the meaning of election campaigning itself. One can easily dismiss this view because it is important what party policies are and what the party will do when they come to power. It is a totally different matter whether or not a party is going to fulfil its election promises when it is in power although the elector usually thinks it will. If it does not, that party will be punished in the next election.

Huckshorn (1984: 132) suggested a more gradual approach to the role of the party organisations. He argued that:

The change has not been universal. Pockets of party-run campaigns still remain, and some of the surviving political machines still rely on the power generated for the precinct captains by patronage appointments, but even the machines have adopted many of the new techniques of campaigning.

Some other scholars put forward an alternative interpretation emphasising that political parties are transforming rather than declining. They say that with the increased availability of new technologies and campaigning techniques the party organisations have in some cases started to provide much better campaigning services including training sessions, survey data, and media assistance (Herrnson, 1986, pp. 590-591).

We now return to the main argument about the effects of party campaigning on the electoral process. As discussed above the counter account dismisses the idea that election campaigning through grassroots activism can make a difference or influence election results. From this point of view party organisations have changed due to

technological and social innovations. For the majority of these writers the 'traditional' party organisations and its functions have been made redundant by mass communication technology and growing masses of PR expertise. However, it is true that party organisations changed not merely as a result of such developments. The availability of mass communication technology -television and mass media-, increased use of opinion polling, computers and the internet does not necessarily mean the decline of grassroots organisations and party oriented campaigning. It can be quite the opposite. The more a party has these technologies and expertise at its disposal the more effective it would become in terms of election campaigning. May be the best example for this is the Welfare/Virtue Party during the 1990s in Turkey. The WP combined the very well organised militant like grassroots organisations with the latest campaigning technology (e.g. used computers to keep a full record of every voter in neighbourhoods in all local party branches) and made surprising electoral gains during the 1990s.²⁷⁸

7.2.2 The Pro-Argument: Benefits of Party Membership

In recent years, there has been a renewed interest in the role and effect of party organisations on the electoral performance of political parties. These studies focused on local party organisations and grassroots activism (For example see Clarke, H et al 2000; Crotty, 1971; Frensdreis, P et al 1990; Huckfeldt and Sprague, 1992; Kramer, 1970; Seyd and Whitely 1992; Whiteley and Seyd 1994 and 1999). It seems that one reason for the low interest in party organisations and their influence on the electoral process is that the role and vitality of their activities in regard to the parties' election performance was not a well-studied area within election studies.

Crotty (1971) points out the influence of political party organisations and their activities in obtaining party objectives and above all winning elective offices has not been grasped very well (1971:439). Crotty, in his study 'Party effort and its impact on the vote' argued that party activity made a difference, often substantial, in the proportion of the vote that could be explained. (1971:447). He (1971:443) sums up:

²⁷⁸ The unprecedented election success and the influence of the WP's grassroots activism will be discussed in following section of this chapter.

A well-organised party that extends itself to campaigning for its candidates can have a decided impact on increasing its proportionate share of the vote. Put more directly, organisation, as the professionals have so long been contending, does appear important in achieving party objectives. Party activities, and those conducted during the campaign period in particular, are important influences affecting the vote”.

Despite a declining image in recent years, the mass membership parties are more likely to influence the electoral outcome. Referring to the conventional argument about the diminished effects of the party organisations and local campaigning effects on the electoral outcomes Pattie, C et al (1995) pointed out that:

The conventional wisdom as advanced by the influential Nuffield election studies has been that local campaigning has no impact upon the outcome of elections and serves merely as a ritual activity for local party activists. Clearly, this is no longer a tenable case: the local campaign, while not as widely publicised or as glamorous as its national counterpart, still plays an important function in shaping the outcomes of British general elections.

In recent years, there have been an increasing number of studies focusing on the effect of parties’ activity on voter turnout at the grassroots level. In a major study entitled ‘How to Win a Landslide By Really Trying – the Effects of Local Campaigning on Voting in the British General Election of 1997’ Whiteley and Seyd (1998) analysed the effects of the local party campaigning on the Labour party’s unprecedented election victory in 1997. They argued that until very recently the evidence on the effects of local party campaigning on the vote was restricted almost entirely to the US. Most of these studies indicated that ‘the campaigns had a significant influence on turnout in state and federal elections (Ibid: 4).

In their study of the general election of 1997, Whiteley and Seyd emphasised three important factors suggesting that local election campaigns might be vital for the Labours landslide in 1997. These factors are as follows: First, is the declining partisan attachments among voters which they say have been weakening for decades, and have now reached quite low levels in the UK (1998, p. 7) Therefore, they argued: “Since the evidence suggests that these trends have continued, it is clearly much easier to influence voters by campaigns both at the national and local levels when

partisan attachments have weakened in this way.” (Ibid: 8).²⁷⁹ If the partisan attachments have been weakening for a long time and reached a new low level then winning or persuading new voters must have become relatively easier.

The second factor that they stressed was the ‘electoral swings’. They suggested that if electoral swings are uniform across Britain as they were in the 1950s and 1960s then there is little that local campaigning could achieve. However, they claimed, this situation has changed by the 1990s. The standard deviation of the two-party swing was 4.3 per cent in 1997 compare to 1.4 per cent in 1955 and 2.1 per cent in 1970. ‘Obviously, there is much greater scope for local campaign effects when the changes in party support are so variable across the country’ (ibid: 8). Party dealignment has been an important factor in electoral studies.²⁸⁰ When the level of party dealignment is increasing it is easier for party activists to recruit new voters, supporters or even members. Than it can be argued that it is possible to see an increase in the effects of the grassroots organisation on electoral results where there is a high level of party realignment.

The third factor, in their analysis, is the transformation of the Labour party into ‘New Labour’. For them (1998), ‘New Labour, ‘succeeded in reversing the decades-long decline in membership by an active campaign of recruiting new members after Tony Blair became the leader in 1994’. This new strategy was so successful that the grassroots party grew 40 per cent in its size from 1994 to 1997(1998, p. 8). Therefore one can expect an increase on the effects of local campaigns due to this influx of new members that New Labour recruited.

In their study Whiteley and Seyd observed that “The correlation between the *campaign index*²⁸¹ and the Labour vote share was +0.32, indicating a modest, though

²⁷⁹See also Crotty and Jacobson, 1980, p.27; Wattenberg, 1991, pp. 36-46).

²⁸⁰ The issue of party realignment will be discussed later on.

²⁸¹ In order to assess the impact of grassroots members’ campaign activities during the 1997 general elections in Britain Whiteley and Seyd (1999) developed an index called campaign index. They surveyed activists about the campaign activities such as displaying election posters, donating money to the election funds, driving voters to the polls or taking numbers at polling stations, reminding voters to vote on polling day, delivering leaflets etc. Then they combined all these campaign-related activities into an overall campaigning index for each respondent. They (1999, p.25) explained how the campaign index was calculated: “A respondent scored one for each activity in the first sub-table. The second sub-

statistically “highly significant relationship.”(1998, p.12). It was observed that among various variables “... the Labour campaign index had the largest influence on the voting preferences in 1997, apart from the proportion of working class in that constituency. This indicates that local campaigning was very important in explaining the Labour landslide victory.”

Further in their study Whiteley and Seyd compared the local campaigns carried out by all three: Labour, Conservative and Liberal Democrat parties. They found many similarities between the Labour and Liberal Democrat parties, but less so with the Conservative party campaigning (1998, p. 11). There were often differences. One of the most interesting findings in their study was that the effects of campaigning were greater for the Liberal Democrats than they were for Labour. The Liberal Democrats would have won 69 seats instead of 46 if they had campaigned at twice their actual rate (ibid: 21). As expected the weakest campaign effects in the simulations were for the Conservatives (1998, p.22). In fact one can expect such results since the Conservative party has aged membership organisation and declining party membership figures with very little activism (See Kavanagh and Jones, 1998, p.201). Whiteley and Seyd (1998, p. 22) finally concluded that: “... local party activists play an important role in mobilising the vote in British general elections.”

In regard to the effects of local party campaigns some of the research has focused on the mechanisms and driving forces of political involvement. Studies looked at the patterns of membership, the ways in which individuals become members of a party, the reasons for becoming party an activist, and the ways in which the grassroots organisations influence election results. Likewise, in a recent study Clarke et al (2000) focussed on key questions such as who joins political parties? What draws people to become active party members? What difference does party organisational activity make? (2000, p. 75).

table had four possible responses... 'not at all', 'once', 'twice', 'three or more times'. These responses were scored 0,1,2, and 3 respectively. Thus the scale ran from zero (an individual did nothing at all) to 31 (an individual responded 'yes' to each of the seven items in the first sub-table and 'three or more' to the eight items in the second). The constituency campaign index in figures 1 and 2 measures the aggregate scores for all respondents in each of the 200 constituencies.”

Regarding grassroots activism Clarke et al, suggested that: "... local parties' campaign efforts continue to matter in an age of nationally oriented, media-centred politics suggesting that a party's short-term successes and long-term prospects will be enhanced if it can attract members and mobilise them to work on the party's behalf. Local organisational activity is especially crucial for new parties because they typically lack the financial and political resources available to their old line rivals." (2000, p. 76).

Clarke et al also drew attention to the lack of systematic study of the "political attitudes and beliefs of rank-and-file party members, or of factors that affect how active such people are in local party organisations." (2000, p. 77).

It appears that in their research Clarke et al (2000) examined three important aspects of grassroots activism; the motives of activists to join the party, the role of the local party organisations and the factors that influence the degree of grassroots activism.

In this context it must be mentioned that membership continues to be an invaluable asset for political parties for several reasons: to maintain the image of a mass party; as a viable channel for the political representation, as legitimisers, as a means of communicating to the electorate and more importantly members have been valued as a means of electoral mobilisation (Mair, 1994, p.15). One of the indispensable roles of the membership is to have a party organisation itself in the first instance, then come the other benefits as mentioned above. The effects of party organisation or local campaigning on the electoral process cannot be considered separately from the membership. Party members, says, Whiteley, are a distinct group of people who by joining a party participate in politics far more than ordinary citizens (Whiteley, 1995, p. 211-233). As stated in Chapter 6, membership especially active membership is the key element, the main motor of electoral campaigns carried out by party organisations. More than anything else party organisations need party members, officers, volunteers and political activists who are willing to give their time and talents, for the success of the party and its candidates (Bibby, 1987, p.108).²⁸²

²⁸² For elaboration on membership see chapter 3. I have discussed party membership, especially grassroots activism extensively in chapter 3.

7.2.3 Why Does Party Organisation Matter?

If the main purpose of political parties is to contest elections in order to gain control of public offices, and organising government (See Huckshorn, 1984, p. 21) then winning election contests becomes the most important condition that every aspirant party must achieve/fulfil.

There is no doubt that electoral campaigning is the most significant aspect of political party activities. Frensdreis, P et al (1990) asked does party organisation matter? In this study they looked at two things: first, was the position of local party organisations within the electoral process and second, they examined the relationship between local party organisational activity and electoral outcomes for the 1980, 1982, and 1984 elections (1990, p. 226).

The role of organisations in the process of mobilisation has always been considered as important (Pickvance, 1976, p.212). Organisations, argued Pickvance, “are the means by which social forces develop and contradictions are expressed, and linked.”(1976, p.212). Party organisations within the electoral process are seen as central actors in this process. It is argued that:

As a starting point to analysing party organisations as independent electoral actors, political parties should be seen as strategic actors operating within particular environments. Like Schlesinger (1984), we assume the goals of political parties are to contest (and ultimately win) elections. (Frensdreis, P et al (1990, p.227).

As the second part of their study Frensdreis, P et al (1990) investigated the relationship between local party activities and electoral results. In this section it was concluded that at local level, party organisational strength and activity “...can make a difference for the electoral fortunes of the parties.” (Frensdreis, P et al, p. 232).

Another similar study from America by John Bibby asked the key question concerning party organisation of whether or not they can make a difference in determining election outcomes. He argues, “The journalistic reports and scholarly case studies provide evidence that the party organisations can have a critical impact”.

He Frensdreis, P et al (1990 p. 107) sums up:

... studies have demonstrated that party organisations do influence election outcomes. Cotter and his associates, in a study of thirty-two nonsouthern states during the last half of the 1970s, found that there was a strong correlation (+.46) between the ability of parties to increase their share of the vote and their holding an organisational strength advantage over the opposition party.

It appears that the level of party organisational strength and activity makes a positive contribution to the electoral outcomes of a particular party. The organisational strength is determined by a variety of variables such as the organisational structure, its typology whether it is democratically run or not, the membership composition, the degree of commitment and beliefs of the members, the principles and rules that the organisation run by.

The level of party activity is also determined by a wide variety of factors such as financial, intellectual, organisational, technological and political resources, strategy and tactics, past experiences, leadership skills, the degree of conviction and commitments shared by the majority of grassroots activists, members attitudes and political aspirations. According to Scarrow, S (1996: 42-45) party members, the indispensable component of the mass parties, should be seen as assets in terms of direct electoral benefits, outreach benefit, financial, labour, linkage and innovation benefits and personnel benefits as well. Inevitably, one of the key questions we are facing is how party organisation affects the electoral process.

7.2.4 How Party Organisation Makes A Difference?

Parties have a variety of functions. A party should inform the electorate about the party's policies, goals and ideology. It helps to create an identity, unity and strengthens the party attachment and commitments among the grassroots activists. Finally, the most crucial role of the campaigning is to influence the electoral outcome. To achieve that campaigning aims to make sure that party supporters will turn out and vote for the party as well as to convert other voters to increase the party's share of the vote (Pattie, C. et al, 1995, p.969). A well-organised party organisation is perhaps the first condition for any kind of electoral achievement. Even if the party leader is successful to use sophisticated means of communication, without a committed

grassroots organisation he won't be achieving much more than what his closest opponent can also do. As election campaigns are increasingly being carried out by nationwide professional corporations competing parties would have the chance to match each other by increasing the funding for campaigning. But this is not true for local party organisations. The local grassroots organisations cannot be set over night to perform vote canvassing or provide services for the candidates. To establish an effective local party organisation takes time and requires an ideological closeness and a common identity.

It is not the numbers of grassroots organisations but their resources: political information and knowledge, time, finance; attitudes, beliefs and ideology, degree of commitments; social background etc., which have an impact on the vote turnout and election results.

It can be argued that the human face of politics and political parties is represented by grassroots organisations. One of the advantages of having large and active grassroots organisation is to go out and meet with the electorate not just the party members but ordinary citizens who may or may not vote for the party but still to contact to those and spread the party's policies, aims and ideology. During an election campaign one – to –one meetings and door-to-door canvassing can be invaluable. In highly developed, individualised societies because of the high level of alienation one-to-one contacts yield results, and in traditional, close communities where personalised contacts are valued and trusted.

Party activism becomes much more important where there is a weakening of partisan attachments and a high level of electoral volatility. It has been extensively documented that partisan attachments have been weakening in the USA. This trend reflects itself through various kinds of attitudinal and behaviour manifestations such as an increase in the numbers of independent candidates, 'a rise in split ticket voting' and declining individual partisan identification (See Frensdreis, J et al 1990:225; Whiteley and Seyd 1999:7). Dissatisfaction with existing political parties is widespread throughout Western Europe and North America. Similarly national surveys conducted in 1990 and 1991 show a widespread dissatisfaction with Canada's federal political parties (see Clarke, H. et al 2000:77).

According to Whiteley and Seyd (1999) the strength of partisan attachment has been declining in Britain too. In fact before the 1997 general election reached a very low level. Whiteley and Seyd make a direct connection between the weakening strength of partisan attachment among voters and local election campaigns' importance in influencing the vote (see *ibid* 1999, p.7). In Western Europe and Turkey there has also been widespread disaffection with mainstream political parties. Following the military coup of 12 September 1980 in Turkey there has been a very significant partisan realignment and electoral volatility since the mid 1980s. (See Kalaycioglu, 1997, pp.4-5; Özbudun, 2000 and Tosun, 1999).

In fact in the last two decades electoral volatility and partisan realignments were partially responsible for Refah's sudden rise first in the local (in 1994) then in general elections (in 1995). In other words this electoral volatility and widespread dissatisfaction with the mainstream centre right and centre left parties provided fertile ground for Refah's militant, truly committed, energetic, hardworking men and women in the grassroots organisations to win the support of the disillusioned masses throughout the 1990s.

I will return to this point shortly. For now let us look at grassroots activism and its importance to the pro-Islamic WP/VP in the mid 1990s. In this study I am aiming to investigate the role and effect of grassroots activists on the unprecedented rise of Political Islam in Turkey in the recent years. This is a striking feature of the WP/VP and has been pointed out by some of the students of Turkish politics as well. It illustrates how in a short period of time grassroots activists made such an impact on the electoral success of the WP. Refah claims to have over four million registered members and this figure alone makes the WP the biggest political party in terms of membership.

Throughout the 1990s, some Turkish students of politics have acknowledged the influence of local party activists on the electoral outcomes. Despite this recognition of the WP/VP's very well organised, highly motivated, missionary-like grassroots activists and their influence over electoral outcomes, this area has not been seriously studied from a sociological perspective

More than any other mainstream political parties, the NSP and later the WP has always maintained the face-to-face relationship as the communication model at the grassroots level (Şen, 1995, p.83). As part of their party activism the WP's grassroots activists organise donations, set up community help centres in the neighbourhoods, and make regular visits door-to-door, to disseminate the party's goals, ideology, program and messages. They also listen to the comments; suggestions, grievances and demands of their potential voters rather than merely rely upon mass communication, as the other mainstream parties do. (Şen, 1995, p.83). It seems that this approach gives a considerable advantage to the Welfare Party compared to its rival secularist parties.

With its claimed 4 million registered members, the WP was Turkey's only mass based political organisation (See Berkey, 1996, p. 45; Çakir, 1994, p. 216-232; Darnton, 1995; Kalaycioglu, 1994; Özbudun, 2000; Sayarı, 1996, p.36; Şen, 1995, p. 82-91). Of course in this case because of the closure of the WP and foundation of the VP to replace it we need to examine whether this membership performance and more importantly the grassroots activism will continue with the Virtue Party or not.

7.2.5 The Turkish Discourse on Grassroots Activism

It has been observed, through literature reviews that there is little research on the question of who grassroots activists are? We do not know much about their socioeconomic, demographic and political backgrounds or ideological beliefs. Also we do not know much about why they are drawn in to this ideology and why they have become political activists. And more importantly we do not know what the specific features of the grassroots activists are. I am going to investigate whether they are distinct in any way from the other party activists or not.

If we return to the issue of grassroots activism or local party campaigning in Turkey we will see that it has been utilised often by the pro-Islamic WP than by other political parties (See Özbudun, 2000 and Kalaycioglu, 1998). There is no doubt that other parties have membership organisations and do organise local election campaigns

during the election periods but none of them match the scale of the WP's grassroots organisation. For example Ersin Kalaycioglu (1997: 36) points out that:

On the eve of the 1995 elections, numerous party activists, at the grassroots level, kept track of every voter deemed critical to the party's victory. They visited each voter before the elections, and, on election day, provided transportation to and from the polling stations for those who needed it.

Compare to Kalaycioglum, Sayari (1996) takes a much wider perspective on grassroots activism. According to Sayari WP's dedicated grassroots activists are one of the most important causes of Refah's growing popularity.

Refah owes its increasing electoral support to an efficient, disciplined, highly motivated, and well-financed organisation. The Islamists have the largest number of party workers among all Turkish political parties. Refah's grassroots organisations staffed with dedicated cadres, male and female, who work with a missionary zeal and benefit from advanced technology, such as computers with voter registration data. Tightly organized in cell like units in each neighbourhood, Refah relies less on the media for disseminating its views and more on face-to-face contacts with the voters. (Sayari, 1996, p. 36).

One of the best-known Turkish writers on political Islam is Rusen Çakır. Çakır with his objective approach has become the most celebrated writer on the Islamic movement. For him the main strategy of the WP's membership organisation is focused on the elections. As a part of this strategy the party aims to mobilise all of its members for the election campaigning and to recruit new members as much as the party's votes at the last elections. Refah's model of organisation is unique: it is called *tesbih* (rosary) and it appoints representative to every single neighbourhood and these representatives would appoint other representatives to every street, quarter and every apartment. "teachers" have carried out the education of party members. In the sub-districts there are "head teachers". In the district and regions there are "general inspectors" and "head teachers" who are responsible for educating the members. Refah, as a parallel to its main organisation, mobilises the *hanim komisyonulari* (commission of ladies). Right after an election, the WP's highly motivated grassroots organisations start to campaign for the next election as if it were going to be held tomorrow (Çakır, 1994, pp. 51-59). The way that a party organises itself is very important for an effective and successful election campaign. Beside the youth and men commissions women turned out to be very effective campaigners. They go street-to-street in their respective neighbourhoods, and canvas building-to-building,

apartment –to-apartment, door-to-door and meet people mostly women in their private living spaces in a friendly manner. They organise house meetings where a *hatip* – good speaker or agitator- man or woman would speak to 30 to 50 people at once.

In a similar vein Sencer Ayata (1997: 52) emphasized two key aspects of the WP/VP's party organisations, which are crucial to its unprecedented rise. The first of them is the strong, well organized and militant characteristic of grassroots organizations. Second is what these organisations are offering to potential voters.

The WP's organisational strength has been highlighted by another writers as well. For instance Ziya Öniş (1997, p. 755), after highlighting the WP's great organisational strength, stresses how in an age of TV oriented communication the WP concentrated on grassroots organisations and face-to-face contact with the electorate. The WPs representatives apply a step by step mobilisation strategy at the local level. Computers were employed to great effect for campaigning purposes. In his analysis he finally emphasises that material benefits were offered to the poor people-potential voters- in the *gecekondu* areas (ibid: 755-756). Although Öniş approaches the question of the rise of the WP from an economic determinist perspective, he finally recognises the importance of the WP's organisational strength which, is not less important than the economic conditions of it. And finally Margulies and Ergin also point out that the WP is the only party with a local grass roots organisation among the Turkish political parties (1997, p. 151).

There are Western commentators who also emphasised the outstanding role of the grassroots activists in the rise of political Islam in Turkey. Henri Barkey (1995) points out that the success of the Islamist party on 24th December 1995 was partly due to efficient utilisation of their capabilities and the complete failure of the rest of the mainstream parties to maintain consistent messages. For him there is one distinctive aspect of the Islamist Welfare Party that it has a nationwide grass-roots party organisation.

The Welfare Party did as well as it did because it had been labouring for years to build a nationwide grass - roots party organisation. Its local cadres have worked their respective districts street-by-street and building-by-building, ...

With its claimed 4 million registered members, Refah is Turkey's only mass - based political organisation... (Berkey, 1996, p.45).

Also a New York Times journalist wrote that:

No political machine can beat the Welfare Party when it comes to grass-roots organisation. Women wearing headscarves go door to door in the slums proselytising and meet inter city buses to take new arrivals in hand. (Darnton, 1995).

Islamists in Turkey combine their community work: charities, schools, clinics, and cooperatives, with electoral canvassing. Other political parties concentrate on high-powered media campaigns and enlisting celebrities to support them in public meetings, but they are far more deficient in campaigning and canvassing at the grass-roots level. The WP also makes use of media events and high - profile personalities, but they mainly operate through local party machines involved in clientilistic networks at the grass roots level (Zubaida, 1996, p.11).

"In its grassroots approach, the RP fields a devoted body of cadres from all walks of life. In Istanbul one is impressed by the enthusiasm, friendliness and optimism of the many young men and women who have established networks in the localities and work through them. Candidates accompany local cadres on home visits. They offer advice on how to deal with complicated bureaucracies, provide support during family celebrations and crises, such as weddings and funerals.... Women cadres play particularly important roles in gaining access to homes and establishing female networks". (Zubaida 1996, pp. 11-12).

Contrary to the general trend in America and Europe the WP/VP maintains its large party organisations. And through its well-organised, highly committed, militant grassroots organisations the WP/VP has been making considerable electoral gains. In the following section of this chapter I will be introducing my empirical data and interpreting it in relation with the grassroots activism.

7.3 Not Like Any Other Party:

The VP Grassroots Activists In Perspective

“We are not like seasonal workers, we don’t get in touch with people every 5 years but we are always among the people. As a representative of the neighbourhood I attend the neighbourhood’s committee meetings every week regularly. I send flowers or visit if there is a wedding.”²⁸³

As was already argued in the first half of this chapter among the mainstream parties only the Welfare, the predecessor of the Virtue Party, came near to being classified as a mass membership party in Turkey. The rest showed the characteristics of a cartel party.²⁸⁴ As a mass political party the WP and VP have maintained rather large grassroots organisations consisting of very active, devout, highly informed, highly motivated, ideologically oriented members. There is a group of people within the VP’s file-and-rank members, what I call grassroots activists, who are highly distinct from the rest with their many distinct qualities: well educated, highly skilled, better paid, high social status, high ideological conviction. Above all this group has better resources to dispense for political purposes (See Chapter 6).

Throughout the 1990s the WP/VP’s party organisation with its electoral and campaigning qualities was acknowledged and admired by many of its opponents. According to media reports during the last general elections (in 18 April 1999) campaign the Motherland Party drew their campaigning strategy and tactics from past election campaign strategies of the WP.²⁸⁵ This report was highly significant to indicate how the WP/VP’s campaigning style was emulated by even its worst opponents. Before moving on to grassroots activism I shall reiterate that in Turkey since the 1980s election results have been decided by big metropolitan cities (See Chapter 4).²⁸⁶ In this context the characteristics of the city developers needs to be remembered. As was said in Chapter 4 the population of the metropolitan cities is

²⁸³ See interview with representative of the Şehit Kubilay Neighbourhood.

²⁸⁴ See Özbudun, 2000.

²⁸⁵ See Istanbul daily *Milliyet* 28 January 1999.

²⁸⁶ See Istanbul daily *Cumhuriyet*, “Birinciye varoslar belirleyecek” (16 April 1999) (Squatters will decide the winner); Also see Istanbul daily *Milliyet* 7 Ocak 1999 (7 January 1999); Istanbul daily *Milliyet* 20 Nisan 1999 20 (April 1999).

highly heterogeneous. There is a big gulf in income and living standards among the city populations. As is frequently cited in the Turkish media there are two Turkeys. The first group is a small minority which has the living standards of major western European countries. The 'other Turkey' as it is called lives at the standard of Third World countries. In these big cities the two Turkeys live side by side. The 'other Turkey' lives in the *gecekondus* (shantytowns) and consists of over 50 percent of the population in Istanbul, Ankara and İzmir. As I also pointed out in chapter 4 the bulk of the WP/VP's popular support comes from gecekondu areas. Thus the gecekondu and grassroots activism in these areas deserve special consideration, which I intend to elaborate in the following pages.

First it needs to be established how grassroots activists are working on the ground and how active they are. How much time do they spend on average a month? How much contact do they have in a week? Where do they meet with potential voters, supporters or their own constituencies? What strategy and tactics are being used? What are the tools being used? What are the methods of their activism? What do they do for example before, during and after the election campaigning? What are the main patterns of election campaigning? Where do they get the money they need for campaigning? Do they raise money during their campaign?

7.3.1 How Often Do They Meet the Potential Voters?

As a grassroots activist how often do you meet with those people who are potential voters, supporters or would be persuaded to join the party?

As table 7.1 indicates one fifth (19 %) of my informants have always plenty of opportunities to meet people. This means they have no preset time frame but admits there are always plenty of opportunities for party activism. Another one fifth (19 %) of them meets with their constituencies every evening but more often during the election campaigns while ten percent meets potential voters and supporters everyday. Forty (40 %) percent of them to do so at least once a week while seven (7 %) percent canvass 3 or 4 times a week and 5 percent of them which is a very active section meet 20 to 25 people everyday. Table 7.1 indicate that the VP's grassroots activists are

highly active in their respective neighbourhoods. The majority (60 per cent -if aggregated) said they interact everyday with someone for canvassing purposes.

Table: 7.1 How often do you meet with the potential voters?

HOW OFTEN DO YOU MEET?	FREQUENCY OF OCCURRENCE	% (PER CENT)
There are always plenty of opportunities to meet people	8	19
Every evening (but more often during the election campaigning).	8	19
Everyday	4	10
At least once a week	17	40
At least 3 to 4 times a week	3	7
I see approximately 20 to 25 people every day.	2	5
Total	42	100.00

Source: Fieldwork

It must be noted that, the way in which social life is organised in the *gecekondus* is a very important determinant for campaigning. The organisation of a community, its main characteristics of social relations, socioeconomic and demographic factors are all important variables in the electoral process and are equally so in terms of election campaigning. Social life in *gecekondus* is similar to primary relations.²⁸⁷ The sense of community, unity and solidarity is highly effective and consistent. The majority of people in a neighbourhood know each other very well. They know each other by name, their occupation, where they come from, their families, kin relations, income and political inclinations. All is common knowledge in the *gecekondus*.

In most cases *gecekondus* were established as a result of chain migration from the same district. What Turkish sociologists termed as *hemşehrilik* (See chapter 4) has provided a strong communal identity for those migrants who are surrounded by a totally alien city full of 'others'. Some writers pointed out that in the big cities the *hemşehrilik* ties provided bases for extensive social solidarity networks in poor urban areas.²⁸⁸ It has been part of a survival strategy for the *gecekondus* population.

²⁸⁷ For some information on social relation and living conditions in *gecekondus* see Acar, F 1994, pp. 313-324; Ayata, A 1994, pp.325-340; Demir, E 1994, pp. 357-366; Kurdoglu, A 1994, pp. 367-384; Gökce, B 1994, pp.283-294 and Özer, I 1994, pp.303-312.

²⁸⁸ For the socioeconomic and demographic characteristics of *gecekondus* a research done by Devlet Planlama Teşkilatı (1991) (State Planning Organisation on *Gecekondus* population), DPT Matbaası, Ankara; Also see Istanbul daily Milyet, "Gecekondus 1999" 31 March 1999 and 1 April 1999 *Bütün umutları çocukları* (All their hopes are their children).

Although these neighbourhoods are not always populated by people from the same ethnic, religious or district background but there are other issues that bring them together usually the sense of 'us' as opposite to 'others'. Sharing the same socioeconomic conditions, facing the same problems regarding the lack of services etc., brings people closer. Given the close community ties in the *gecekondu* areas party campaigning would be carried out in an effective and informal way. Some of my informants talked about their canvassing activities. Here are some of them: For example a representative of Bahçeleriçi neighbourhood describes his canvassing activities as follows: "Every evening I go to visits in the neighbourhood. This is a *gecekondu* (squatter) area so everyone knows each other and, for this reason, there are always plenty of opportunities to meet people" A similar point was made by Yılmaz Dogan: "We live side by side with our people and always interact with the local party organisation as well as the local people" (Neighbourhood of Türközü). Mehmet Arı of Hürel neighbourhood describes how he meets people: "Almost every evening, after work I would come together with people in the neighbourhood."

On the other hand some of my informants made a distinction between the election campaign period and between the elections. 'Since the election atmosphere began I see people on a daily even hourly basis.

KD How about the normal times?

RÖ During the normal times we have got meetings every week. Our routine activities continue whether it is election time or not. After election too we will carry on our activities in the same way. With God's permission we have political or normal social meetings in our neighbourhood (Remzi Özcan representative of Misket Neighbourhood).

Most of the informants I talked to see themselves as a part of the community and spend most of the time doing community work without even realising it. It is apparent from their accounts that their campaigning takes an informal style. In this case the way in which a community lives is very important. The way the *gecekondu* neighbourhoods have developed, socially as well as physically is very conducive for political activism.

The second group, again another 19 % of my informants said they meet at least one person in their neighbourhood every evening. "I meet people from our neighbourhood almost every evening after work (M. Arı, Hürel Neighbourhood). Another activist said: "During the election campaign I canvass 3 to 4 hours every evening." The

reason that this group is active during the evening is because they are working during the day and meet people after dinner in their immediate neighbourhoods.

Social life in Turkey as in many other Mediterranean countries is predominantly organised out-doors within a community rather than in-doors within a family. For this reason it is much easier for activists to get in touch with the people not necessarily in the daytime but evenings or sometimes nights as in the case of house meetings

They usually meet people in teahouses a very common characteristic of Turkish community life. In addition to teahouses these activists would visit houses to canvas. In fact many said it is mostly what they prefer. Usually, they ask a supporter, member or voter of the VP to invite some people from the neighbourhood for a meeting in the evening. It is common to have around 10 to 15 people in these meetings where the host would serve tea, or coffee and the speaker would make a speech. In these house meetings politics is the dominating factor. Communal demands at the local level are raised and proposals discussed.

Some 10 % of them carry out political activities every day. This group consists of retired workers, civil servants, shopkeepers or the self-employed person who has free time during the day and spend some of that on political activities. As the representative of Derbent neighbourhood said: "We have got a daily programme and I visit those places where there is a wedding, an ill person or a funeral" During the election campaigns there are usually daily activities but after the campaign period there are weekly meetings and activities.

The largest group consists of 40 percent of all informants. This group attends weekly meetings that takes place in every neighbourhood's committee and canvasses someone at least once a week. Melih Demir from G. ZekiDoğru neighbourhood explains: "I do meet people at least once a week but it depends on the situation if someone is ill or there is a funeral then I visit those households."

It has been observed that for a VP activist to attend weekly meetings is the minimum.

As Mustafa Şenyurt puts:

The neighbourhood committee, which consist of 17 members, gathers once a week. If there are ill people in the neighbourhood or someone has died then a

delegation from the committee would go and visit these households to offer condolences. Then come the street activities where we go and visit different streets. Before we do that we clearly know who votes for which party in these streets it is all in our computers.

In some cases my informants said they attend one formal meeting a week but at the same time they said there could be several face-to-face individual meetings in a week. "As I don't work much during the winter time I spend some of my time going to the neighbourhood committee and give some help and training to them." In addition, there are some activists who reported meeting fifteen to twenty people every day. Those are usually party administrators, secretaries or other full time party workers.

So far I have tried to find out how often my informants meet with people from their local constituencies and people who are potential voters. Table: 7.1 indicated that the VP's activists are highly active. The majority of them meet someone everyday or evenings, and the rest meet at least one person a week.

7.3.2 How Much Time Is Spent on Activism?

It can be argued that the amount of time devoted to party activities by party activists is one of the key indicators of the influence of the grassroots activism on the electoral outcomes. The prime purpose of grassroots activism is to increase the influence and strength of a particular political party. Therefore, I believe, it is very important to establish how often and for how long an activist undertakes that activity in his/her local branch or constituency level. To this end I have asked the following question. How much time do you normally devote to political activism in an average month?

As table 7.2 shown there is an uneven distribution of political activism among the VP's activists. More than a quarter (26 %) of my informants devoted between five to ten hours to party activism in an average month during the 'normal times'. "Normal times" is exclusive of the period of the election campaigns. During the election campaign many of them stressed that this time would increase as much as four times. Some 15 % of them spent eleven to fifteen hours a month working for their party, while another 13 % devoted up to twenty hours to political activism. Some 15 % of my informants spent twenty to thirty hours in an average month. The largest group,

which is around one-third (31 %) of respondents, devoted more than 35 hours in a month for activism. This is a quite impressive amount of devotion and significant sign of the VP's influential grassroots organisations.

Table: 7.2 Time spent on party activism

HOURS SPENT ON PARTY ACTIVISM	FREQUENCY OF OCCURRENCE	(%) PERCENTAGE
5 to 10	10	26
11 to 15	6	15
16 to 20	5	12
20 to 30	6	15
35 and +	12	31
Total	39	100

Source: same as above.

Since they are highly committed and ideologically driven (almost 60 %) they do not see party activism as a costly activity as many scholars describe it (See Seyd and Whiteley, 1992, p. 86) but something that they see as an important part of their ideological beliefs and social values. As stated in chapter 5 many of them joined the VP in order to support what they call the *Islamic dava* (Islamic cause).

As stated above almost every one of my informants made a distinction in terms of the time they normally devote for party activism. The intensity changes between actual election campaigning and post election. For example 33 % of them said that their activity would normally increase four fold during the actual election campaigns. If one said that he spends up to ten hours in a month this means he would spend as much as forty hours during the election campaigning. Indeed in my own experience the majority of them put long hours and a lot of energy into campaigning. It was expected of the activists to take days off from their workplaces or use their annual holidays during the campaign period. I have witnessed people say they were closing their shop most of the time for two months like Süha Çelik from the *ilçe* of Keçiören, in order to participate in the campaigning.

There were others like Hasan from the youth committee of Mamak *ilçe* who had to find someone to keep his shop open while he was doing errands as member of a youth

committee. There were even people who were workers in Western European countries like Holland, Germany or France coming to Turkey on their annual holiday for the purpose of campaigning with their Islamic brothers. I met such people though not as many took part as during previous election campaigns.

The Islamists are very well organised among the Turkish workers in the Western European countries. The *Milli Görüş Teşkilatı* (The Organisation of National View) is the motor of these organisations. It has been reported over the years by the media that the National View has been organising an army of canvassers, political activists with their latest model automobiles and a considerable amount of financial resources. In addition to that it organises charter flights and sends thousands of *guest workers* to Turkey to vote for the WP/VP providing free or some times cheap tickets for them.²⁸⁹ The importance of these activities organised by the National View abroad is to show the scope and extent of organised election activities. Otherwise the bulk of the election campaigns are run by the local party organisations throughout the country by the local actors.

I have observed committed, devout and hard working activists in every neighbourhood throughout the election campaign. They turn every occasion and every place into an arena for political activity. The activists appeared very competitive, well informed, energetic and ready to work long hours. You would see them organising house or teahouse meetings until very late at night. The members of the youth committee would put party flags all around the neighbourhoods, put the party posters on all available walls, electricity and telephone poles, hang massive portraits of the candidates on cotton banners until 1 or 2 am if not later than that.

I shall now move on to the question of how they meet the people, the potential voters on the ground. It has been assumed that as the VP is a pro-Islamic party it must have

²⁸⁹ See Daily Milliyet 24 Mart 1999 (24 March 1999) ' *Secmen havayollari* ' (Voter Airlines) in this article it was reported that one of the frontrunner champion of the Islamic capital the Kombassan Holding was organising charter flights from various European countries to bring around 4 500 voters to support the VP in the general elections of 18 April 1999. In another article in the same newspaper it was reported that among the Turkish workers the most influential organisation is the MGV those and their supporters will come to Turkey to vote. It continued "At the last general election the Organisation of National View raised around 2 million DM to send to the WP (Milliyet, 24 March 1999).

been utilising the religious institutions like mosques for propaganda and as a recruitment ground. But my data showed that was not the case at all. Rather they prefer house meetings, which they successfully utilise for their political activism. My findings are as follows.

7.2.3 Where Do They Meet With Potential Voters?

VP activists canvass people in diverse ways. Perhaps this diversity reflects the militant characteristics of their political activities in their constituency. Table 7.3 shows that 23 % of the VP activists meets people for political activism in the weekly meetings held by the neighbourhood committee. I will give some details about the neighbourhood committees in the following sections.

Table: 7.3 Regarding your grassroots activism, where do you meet people usually?

Where do you meet?	Percentage
Weekly meetings in neighbourhood	23
Visits for various occasions: weddings, engagements	
Celebrations, visiting sick, elderly or funerals and like.	18
House meetings	16
In Mosques and after the Friday prayers	11
Where ever there is an opportunity	11
In the teahouses	9
Work place	7
At the face-to-face meetings	5
Total	100

Source: Same as above

These committees are the backbone of the local party organisation and number from 14 to 17 members. As mentioned above they have got weekly activity programmes prepared, implemented and assessed by these same committees every week in co-operation with the *ilçe* party organisation.

Salih Bağcı tells about these weekly meetings:

There are weekly meetings usually on Thursdays. The neighbourhood committee meets to discuss the agenda, assess the last weeks' activities and prepares next week's plan. And above all members are called on to make visits and canvass in the neighbourhood.

Some 18 percent of my informants meet people for political activism in a peculiar way that not is developed as a means of canvassing in Western European countries at all. This form is much sociable and less political, at least at the outset. Activists regularly and persistently attend any occasion for celebration, mourning, or any kind of social gathering. They visit ill or elderly people either in their home or in hospital. İdris Erdoğan the representative of Uyanış Neighbourhood explained how he has been actively campaigning and therefore increased party membership by seven and half times in his neighbourhood:

I go everyday. I am the representative of the neighbourhood of Uyanis. While I am visiting I recruit new members and visit the ill. I wish them well, whoever they are whether our neighbour or friend or someone totally unknown. I go to their weddings or funerals. So they accept us. More correctly we go there to introduce ourselves, e. g I am X from the VP's Uyanis neighbourhood party committee. We are here to congregate for your wedding God my bless it. Or lets say we heard that there is a funeral we go there read the Koran and make friends with them. So they like it because we are there in their bad or good, easy or difficult days. This way I increased the number of members from 200 to 1500. At least ten times I have won the award of high achievement in the neighbourhood.

I think the best way to meet people to talk politics is during engagement and wedding celebrations. There you can talk one to one. Then I would visit those houses where there is someone who is ill or has died. You could not talk politics especially at funerals but it gives us a change to make publicity, and talk some non-political issues. When we go to this kind of occasion I usually take a present, nothing too expensive, but it is just good to take something with you. Our people like this if you turn up to their parties, celebrations to share their joy or problems.²⁹⁰

The community ties are much stronger in the *gecekondu* areas. One of the reasons for this is because the majority of the *gecekondu* settlers came from rural parts of the country. Thus the political activism has to take a social or an informal form. The visits organised by the local party organisation are functioning on several levels.

²⁹⁰ See interview with Mustafa Şenyurt, member of the municipality's parliament in Mamak ilçe.

Being there sharing the mood with people in the neighbourhood is certainly an effective form of political activism.

Obviously, gift exchanging is a worldwide cultural phenomenon and studied by many anthropologists. It has a very important role in community life. The VP leadership seems to be aware of this fact, because, according to the VP handbook called: *Halkla İlişkiler Nedir?* (What is Public Relations?) In there the party activists are being strongly advised not to go empty handed on those visits.²⁹¹

Some 16 % of them said they meet people in the house meetings. As the representative of Aşağı Ayrancı neighbourhood, puts it:

We have house meetings every week. In there everyone talks one by one. Also, there are meetings once a week in the neighbourhood, in the *ilçe* (sub-district) and in the *il* (district) and there all the problems are discussed.

These house meetings vary in themselves. Most of them arranged by using the family, kinship, *hemşehrilik*, or ethnic ties. The activists are usually visits such houses and if the host were willing they would ask him to invite some people from the same neighbourhood as an audience. Sometimes he would visit a particular household for tea. In some other case he would invite a group of people to his own home for tea and there he would talk with them. These house meetings are sometimes attended by middle ranking politician like the candidate for the municipality, local parliament, or the chairman of the VP's *ilçe* (sub district) organisation invited as a speaker. This kind of house meetings are usually organised during the election campaigns. Where else do they meet the people?

Over one in ten (11 %) of them said they meet people in the Mosques or after the Friday prayers. In this case, as one would expect, the religious institutions are providing a fertile ground for canvassing. But what is more important is that this religious arena is open to the VP in an unequal term as no other party would utilise Mosques or Friday prayers as the VP does. Therefore it can be argued that the VP has a monopoly over the using of religious institutions to canvass. From this aspect the religious ideology, rhetoric and religious institutions are important assets of the VP.

²⁹¹ See (1998) Fazilet Partisi Halkla İlişkiler Başkanlığı, *Halkla İlişkiler Nedir?* (Virtue Party Chairmen of the PR Affairs, What is Public Relations ?), Ankara, '98.

However, keep in mind that only a small minority (11 %) of the VP activists chose to meet people in the Mosques or Friday masses. The vast majority (90 %) prefer non-religious arenas.

Another 11 % of my informants said they meet people wherever they get an opportunity. This group is a very interesting one and must be the most active group of grassroots activists of all. As theoretically speaking, there must be an immense possibility for such opportunities. As one activist put: "Even on the bus, or while waiting in the queue for a doctor, no matter where I am, I explain our political ideas to other people." ²⁹² M. Balcı of the Şenlik neighbourhood takes the same attitude on canvassing "Wherever I find people I talk politics." M. Karaağaç from the Kutlu neighbourhood too takes his chance for political activism where there is a right moment. He answered the same question with "wherever I got an opportunity I talk to people".

Many of the activists I interviewed or observed in action seemed outgoing, confident, were good communicators and highly informed on current political issues. With these qualities they are able to bring political dialogue into many occasions. They interpret current political issues from their own perspective as a way of informing others. What is more they usually do not hesitate to talk to people they are not so familiar with.

There is another group consisting of 9 per cent of the activists that prefers to meet people in the *kahvehane* (teahouses) in the neighbourhood. As mentioned above the teahouses play a very central role in Turkish community life. It is very common for a Turkish man to spend on average 4 to 5 hours everyday in teahouses discussing everything from daily events to economics, from football to politics. ²⁹³ The teahouses are centres where the majority of men congregate to chat, play cards watch football, listen to the news and reflect or sometimes especially during the election

²⁹² See the interview of representative of Şehit Kübilay neighbourhood.

²⁹³ See Istanbul daily Milliyet 1 Nisan 1999 (1 April 1999). Before the last general elections in April 1999 the daily Milliyet looked at various aspects of the social life in the gecekondu areas and the writer made similar observation on teahouses.

campaigns host political candidates to listen and discuss. They are usually open until very late including weekends, and serve as a platform for politics.

During my fieldwork in Ankara I attended, as part of my research, many of the teahouse meetings organised by the neighbourhood party branches and usually the candidates were asked to make speeches. The teahouse meetings are the commonest way of canvassing during the election campaigns in Turkey and candidates have the chance of meeting an audience of around 40 to 50 –for a small - or 60 to 100 people - a large teahouse - at once.

Around 7 % percent of them meet people canvassing in their work place, while 5 % said they meet people one to one in different environments. Workplace canvassing is very important as contrary to the majority of the VP activists this group is actually active outside the boundaries of its own community, some times beyond the *ilçe* (sub-district) boundaries. In this case they are the ones that carry the ideology and policies of the VP much further than many of their colleagues do in the local party branches. Such activity is also valuable because of the community structure in the work places. It is very heterogeneous unlike the neighbourhood's homogenous community so the ideas, policies and political messages of the VP reaches and spread to much wider audiences via this group of activists.

The last group, who prefer to meet people one to one, is very influential too. Although, their numbers are much lower – 5 percent-, because of their special tactics they reap much better results from their activism than their colleagues in the local branch. As has been pointed out by many political scholars face-to-face meetings are always a much effective way to influence someone's voting behaviour.²⁹⁴

7.3.4 What Are Their Perceptions About Their Activities?

The majority of the VP's grassroots activists believe that their political activism is vital to the party's electoral performance. 74 % of them viewed their role as '*very important*'. This is no surprise at all as of course activists most value their effort on

²⁹⁴ See Milbrath and Goel, 1977, p. 37.

behalf of the party. (See chapter 5) They must feel that what they do is good for the party and essential for its success. Here is how a party worker describes their work: "The local party branches are the central pillar of the party." Another activist underlines their role as: "Without local organizations no party can stand up on its feet nor survive. Local organisations keep the party running." Many of my informants acknowledged the crucial role of the party activists at local level. One of them Melih Demir is a member of the executive committee of G.Z. Dogan neighbourhood. For him local organisations are very important and without them nothing would happen. At most, he says, the party would only exist on the signpost. It would not reach out to people. To reach out it must have an organisation behind it.

Around 19 percent of them regarded party activism as 'important'. For this group their activities are an important variable for party's success but there are other issues such as party policies, leadership, nationwide campaigns are important as well. The number of those who did not think that grassroots activism was significant for the party's performance is very small. Just 2 percent of our informants assessed their role as 'not so important' and another 4 per cent put alternative arguments for party performance rather than party activism. After having their opinions on the effects of the grassroots activism I wanted to find out how they think they affect the electoral chances of the VP.

7.3.5 How Do They Improve Their Party's Electoral Fortune?

In this section I want to bring out what my informants said about the role and effects of their own activities. First, Mustafa Şenyurt from Mamak ilçe explains:

"From 1984 to 1991, because of their conformist approach the WP's neighbourhood representatives could not reach out to the people at all. As the WP developed and improved its *ilçe* (sub-district) organisations, extended its organisations in the *mahalles* (neighbourhoods) as well as into the streets as street representatives, its share of the votes increased. After 1989 the WP started to visit teahouses and *meyhaneleri* (pubs) so it increased its share of the vote. We would go there greet them and sit at the tables of those who were drinking or gambling. So they saw that we are not what the media reports say and they voted for us. We have adopted the tactic of 'shameless politicians'. I mean if someone turns one of us down another went there to canvass him. If it

did not work then we would find someone close to him, a relative or sometimes his wife through our lady activists.”²⁹⁵

He continued:

The main point is not to win extra votes. This problem is secondary. But we have developed solidarity. Trade co-operations like Kombassasn, YİMPAŞ, GİYDAŞ have been growing on the basis of this spirit of solidarity. In addition to that there have been small funds established to provide credit for small size investments like the Yutong firms in Yozgat...

Mustafa Şenyurt drew our attention to the relationship between the party organisations and the campaigning: meeting or reaching the people. Rightly, he says that between 1983 and 1991 the WP could not reach people because of two factors. First, was the conformist approach of the party organisations and second was the lack of local organisations. From 1991 onwards the WP expanded its organisation networks vertically as well as horizontally. It extended its branches to the neighbourhood level and appointed representatives to every street and apartment block. Also in terms of the canvassing strategy and tactics it developed a twin head strategy. On the one hand its local organisations turned into social care units providing material benefits like food, fuel, clothing, bursaries for poor students or networking for jobs, hospital beds for patients or helping out in a crisis like for a funeral. On the other hand it used very assertive canvassing and propaganda tactics like ‘shameless salesman’ who tries to sell goods to an uninterested household. As well as the solidarity networks and assertive canvassing tactics a good party organisation needs consistency between its activities’ two elements.

A party can have a great programme and the entirely right policies but if it is not consistent and coherent then it will not have credibility in the public eye. A representative of the Bahçeleriçi neighbourhood brought this issue up. “That is exactly where the difference between our party and the others lies.” “The other parties are only active for one or two months from election to election but our party is active

²⁹⁵ There were some media reports titled like: “*Faziletin Seçim Taktiği : Kovulduğumuz Kapıya Mal Satım* (Virtue party’s Election Tactic: Selling Goods to Door That You Were Turned Down)” Before the last general and local elections (1999) the VP organized a preparation camp in Antalya. In that education seminar the delegates were lectured about some new election tactics. It was stressed that a good salesman is one who sold good to the door that he was turned down. The camp designed to educate the heads of the election committees from all 80 districts. They’re those delegates trained and asked to go to bars, pubs, weddings and funerals for canvassing. See Istanbul Daily Radikal 26 Ekim 1998 (26 October 1998); Sabah 26 Ekim 1998 (26 October 1998).

for 12 months. Our party activities are not bound to the election campaigns but are a year round event. We listen to everyone whether our member or not. In house meetings we go and listen to people then report the problems up to the *ilçe* branch. Contrary to our attitude other parties forget people right after the election campaign.” Representative of Bahçeleriçi neighbourhood noticed the consistency of their activities as opposed to other parties’ activism, which are scattered from one election to other. As he stressed the VP’s activists undertake a year round activity.

It was observed that VP’s activists are very conscious of their own role and influence. When I asked what my informants thought about their contributions one of my informant replied:

Actually the election result decides our contributions. At the last election our party [WP] became the number one by obtaining 33 percent of the votes in our neighbourhood Yeşiltepe. That time we did not have even an election bureau but this time we have got one and that is a sign of our success. If you work hard you will get the prize. You won’t be paid if you did not go to work. (Fazlı Dalkıran, Yeşiltepe neighbourhood).

Maybe the best answer to my question about whether grassroots organisations make any difference or not came from Fazlı Dalkıran. As he put it clearly the proof of the effectiveness of local party campaigning lies in election success. In other words what counts is deeds not words. The WP received a third of all votes at the last elections (in 1995) in Yeşiltepe neighbourhood. He also emphasises the basic principle of ‘no pain no gain showing how aware he is of his role as a political activist. He is especially proud because this time they have an election bureau that they use as a base during the election campaign. As he continues

“We play a very important role here. We are the mirrors of the party at the local level. As the people at the bottom end of the party we take the biggest share of the responsibility during the election campaigns”. (Erdoğru Aydın)

The VP’s activists work voluntarily with great passion knowing that theirs is the only party that has a well-structured party organisation:

Other parties lack this [organisation]. In the past the TTP tried it but failed, the NAP also tried and failed, because our activities are voluntary. Today some of our friends have no money in their pockets for the bus fare but they walk here every day. If they were not volunteers, you would not get them here even if you paid for them. The Secret behind this commitment is the ideals that

people [party activists] share. These people [activists] say, "We are here for the service of the community". It is for everyone regardless of their party affiliation whether they are from the Motherland Party (MP) or Republicans People Party (RPP). (Representative of Aşağı Ayrancı neighbourhood).

What we see here is that a strong sense of commitment to one's ideals among the activists and the significance of doing it voluntarily.

In İdris Erdoğan's words the party activists can be described as the foundation of the party, because, he says the activities in a neighbourhood depend on the representative.

İE I mean our activities are very important. Representatives follows the things, go around to register new members and so on. Everyone including our leaders at the top knows that our work is valuable. Because, first of all, nobody but us who know everything goes around in the neighbourhoods.

KD What can you say if you compare your activities with other parties?

İE "Yes, we have got our special methods. Other parties cannot work like us".

KD Why not?

İE "I do not know. This is a matter of belief and a method of working so no other party would work as much as we do."

Salih Bağcı from Tepebasi neighbourhood puts their role on the increased electoral support to the WE/VP this way:

In our neighbourhood there was a 2 per cent increase in our votes from 1994 to 1995. We all as the members of the neighbourhood executive committee, youth committee and commission of ladies have been doing one-to-one meetings in our neighbourhood. Consequently we now have a very good potential voter turnout for our party... Personally I have not seen any other party work as we do: one-to-one meetings and door-to-door canvassing in our neighbourhood. They have got some voter support but not an organisation like ours.

Similarly, Aydın Yürür the representative of Çaldıran neighbourhood points out that 'the activities of the neighbourhood organisation play an important role in the rise of the VP. "We are the party in here," he says.

"If our activities are not approved by the people no one would vote for us. We are in constant contact with people. Whatever the occasion first we run for the help of the needy because of our closeness and genuine friendship people trust us".

In the same vein Mehmet Arı (Hürel neighbourhood) stresses the direct connection between the local and national level.

Since the days of the WP we are the most active party in Mamak. We organise weekly meetings. If you are not successful in the local elections you are not going to succeed in the national elections either. So we explain ourselves to the people in greater detail. We do correct the wrongs that are said about us. We are putting in great effort to pre-empt the media's attacks on our party.

The connection between local and general election comes up time and time again. It is not without good reason. It is where the grassroots organisations exist and carry out daily activities. They are all well aware that whatever they do in their particular locality it has an impact at the national level. As M. Arı's view reflects how he perceives his role in his locality. He, rightly and consciously, equates his effort in the neighbourhood with the nationwide electoral success of the VP. He also emphasizes another vital aspect of the party activism that is the propaganda and counter-propaganda in the neighbourhoods. Propaganda is the prime objective of the campaigns but so far has not been brought out by my informants. The reason for this may be the negative connotations that the concept of propaganda carries or it may be they see their activities as more effective than propaganda itself. However as was observed the media had a very negative approach towards the pro-Islamic party WP/VP. In general this undermining of the VP is going on in the mainstream press as well as by the many privately owned TV channels. So propaganda and counter-propaganda is an essential part of the grassroots activism to counter balance this negative attitude.

Şuaip a member of the youth committee in Mamak see their role as very important for the VP's success in elections. He emphasises that:

Via our activities the leadership holds the 'pulse of the public'. They get feedback about the people's needs and feelings, plus our youth committee organises activities designed for young people in the neighbourhood. By doing this we recruit young people into our ranks.

It is very interesting to see how Şuaip despite his young age sees his position between the party and the public. For him the local party organisation is a kind of organ that

communicates between the party and neighbourhood community. It is kind of a nerve to pass the demands and feelings from community to the party. On the other hand he points out the activities designed especially for young people. Indeed at the last general election the VP developed some very clever tactics and strategies to attract the young, especially the unemployed young people. For this reason the VP set up teahouses in every neighbourhood where they provide free facilities like table tennis or snooker. The tea is very cheap and those who have no money are entitled to free tea.²⁹⁶ Naci Tunalı from Ekin Başak neighbourhood also emphasised that some of their activities like football are directed at the youth in their locality.

Yılmaz Dogan from Turkozu neighbourhood puts their role and duties as:

No doubt that our activities have been very instrumental for the electoral success of party. Our duties are: providing ready information to the *ilçe* branch and organising coffeehouse and house meetings and like. There are sixty-two neighbourhoods in Mamak and there is no way the administrative committee of the sub-district, which consists of 24 people, could cope with all 62 neighbourhoods. There simply are not enough people to do that. So without us they would not know what is going on here. However when we as neighbourhood committees each have got 14 people that makes 900 in all 62 neighbourhoods and provides a bridge between sub-district and neighbourhoods. We provide organisation. If there is a meeting we organise it and let the sub-district committee know so that they would send some representative. We are 900 people in total and all the work is done by us without any payment.

Y. Dogan rightly says that without them the party branch in the *ilçe* of Mamak simply cannot know what is going on in all 62 neighbourhoods of Mamak. For him they *act as a bridge between the ilçe branch and the neighbourhoods*. It is manpower as well as of resources that are needed for activism. The *ilçe* executive committee is made of 24 people compared to 900 people in all the neighbourhoods and they all work voluntarily without any payment, something that reflects the nature of their relationship with the party.

In fact the numbers are much higher than he thinks. Neighbourhood organisations, mainly the executive committees, are organised in the image of the *ilçe* organisations. The *ilçe* executive committees consist of 30 people. A chairman and his deputy head

²⁹⁶ See Istanbul daily *Milliyet* 23 January 1999.

them. Fourteen of them are chairpersons of various sub groups like election affairs, public relations etc and equal numbers of their deputies. Plus there is a ladies' commission and youth committee. I observed that the neighbourhood committees usually consist of between 20 to 30 members, which means that in Mamak there are 1240 to 1860 party members in the neighbourhood executive committees. If we add the ladies commissions and youth committees this figure goes much higher. I am not suggesting that the entire neighbourhood have got active ladies commissions but they mostly have the youth committees actively involved. When added to the Keçiören *ilçe*, which has got 43 neighbourhoods, and between 860 to 1290 members in the executive committees it makes a considerable number of (between 2100 to 3150) grassroots activists in Ankara's two sub-districts. Plus, there are many other activists that are not necessarily members of these committees. It all adds up to a considerable number of people who are playing a very constructive and influential role in their localities every day, 'every hour of the day' as they would say.

7.3.6 The Main Points Emerging From The Interviews?

It appears that grassroots activists perceived the role and the effects of the political activism as very important for the party's electoral success. These points can be summarised as follows: The grassroots activists see themselves as messengers of the party reaching out and spreading the party's messages across society. As well as carrying the party messages to the voter they also behave like a nerve relaying information from their particular community to the upper levels. For some the success of the WP during the 1990s was due to the expansion of the local party branches at the sub-district, neighbourhoods and street levels. This point is especially important to the expansion of the grassroots organisations from top to bottom that made the WP/VP the only mass membership party.

For some of my informants continuity is the key aspect of their activities. Many stressed that their activity is a year round campaign. They carry on their tasks routinely, regardless of the election campaigns. Unlike the other parties in Turkey many of my informants said they carry out their conduct all year round that in turn helps to build public trust in them.

Another common recurring factor is that the activists are working voluntarily. In many cases the VP's activists are a hundred percent volunteers. Of course there are some who expect some gain, material or otherwise, out of their activism but it is not the driving force for the majority of the VP's activists.

Beside the voluntarism they carry out a lot of community work. For many this is a way of serving the community. The notion of being at the service of the community or society is one of the defining characteristics of the WP/VP. This is especially important because politics in Turkey has been dominated by elite who sees it as not being at the service of the society but dictating or governing the society. This aspect is apparent from the outset too. None of these mainstream parties has ever undertaken community work, or organised a charity for the poor or needy. But the WP/VP has been doing it extensively.

As was argued previously no party could match the size and quality of the WP/VP's grassroots organisations. The grassroots organisations are given real meaning and an open space to perform on the ground. This situation is closely connected with the party structure as well. In the case of the cartel parties the membership and local organisations carry little weight. This is because everything about campaigning like election campaigning, fund raising, advertisement and so on is carried out by the central office or by a professional campaign expertise group under the leadership so there is little room for grassroots activism. But because the VP is a mass membership party the local party organisations are doing the bulk of campaigning.

The last pattern that emerges is the special tactics and strategies that the WP/VP developed. In one account it can be said that because the VP is the only mass membership party its campaign strategy and tactics must be different from then the rest of the political parties. This is true to a degree but other parties also have party activists and local organisations. However since the beginning of the 1990s the WP has introduced different creative tactics like utilising the ladies commission as one of its main campaigning forces. Initially it looked very unlikely given the party's attitude towards women in general and the status of Muslim women in particular. It was unthinkable to have women as one of the main campaigning forces in a male

dominated religious conservative party. Until 1999 the party did not even have a women candidate for parliament. Despite this it has been successfully integrating women into its rank and file and currently there are three women MPs in parliament.

When asked how do you think your activities contribute to the VP's success? The answers come, as what they think is most effective way of contacting people, winning their hearts and friendship, their trust and later may be their vote.

7.4 What They Do And How They Do It?

‘ How can I vote for you while I am eating the meal and bread that is provided by the VP?’

In this section different dimensions and methods of the VP activism will be discussed. As noted earlier since the early 1990s the WP and later the VP displayed a wide range of political activism. Surprisingly many of those activities are happening outside the political sphere like charity work, visiting people socially for occasions from wedding ceremonies to funerals.

There are various kinds of activities carried out by the local party organisations. They are as diverse as distributing roses in the more affluent non VP neighbourhoods -like in *Tıpfakültesi Caddesi*- to organising charity work such as distributing clothing, food, coal, or even bursaryies for poor school children in the *gecekondu* areas (like Hürel or Türközü). The VP concentrates especially on the poor *gecekondu* areas in where high level of unemployment, poverty, low quality housing, low income, low quality of public services, etc., are the defining characteristic.²⁹⁷ It has been noticed by many Turkish political writers and reported by the media that the WP/VP has been concentrating its activities in the *gecekondu* areas.²⁹⁸

²⁹⁷ For a detailed analysis of the *gecekondu* (squatter) areas reader may consult chapter 4.

²⁹⁸ See Ayata (1997: 52); Çakır (1994: 51-59); Kalaycıoğlu (1997); Öniş (1997: 755-756); Özbudun (2000); Sayarı (1996: 36); Şen (1995: 82-91). Also see media report “VP Gecekonduarda Devlet Baba”, *Milliyet* 23 Ocak 1999 (The VP is the Father State in Squatters), Istanbul daily *Milliyet* 23 January 1999.

Beside its political activities the VP's local organisations provide various kinds of material aid for the poorest sections of the gecekondus. From my observations and interviews I can say that most of the time these activists see themselves as charity workers who are there to help the poor, ill, elderly, disabled, orphans and widows. When asked what kind of activities they carry out as neighbourhood organisations the majority of them would speak about this charity work. Here we will examine what sort of charity work they undertake.

Table: 7.4 What are they doing, as political activism

What they do? The Activities	Percentage
Charity work (providing material aid (food, clothing, fuel, etc.,) and social services)	37
House visits (house meetings)	19
Attend weekly meetings of local Party Organisation	15
Visits for any social occasions (Weddings, funerals, Patient visits)	12
Developing and maintaining good relations in the Neighbourhood	10
Educating people (propaganda, counter propaganda, Putting up posters, etc.,)	8
Total	100

Source: Same as above

Table 7.4 indicated that 37 percent of my informants reported that their political activism is dominated by charity work; provision of some material and nonmaterial commodities, guidance and other kind of assistance. Some 19 percent of them said the house visits or meetings are most favourable for them while (15%) of them said the weekly meetings in the neighbourhood branch was the most common form of activism they perform. Some 12 % of them prefer social visits to these households in where there is that something celebrated or mourned. They often attend wedding

celebrations; visit the ill, attend funerals and so on. For 10 % of them developing and maintaining good relationship with the voters is the most favourable type of political activism. Now I shall elaborate these points a bit more.

It appears that the provision of material benefits and social services or we called 'charity work' or community work comes first among the activities of the VP's grassroots activists (Table 7.4). Some (37 percent) of my informants placed 'charity work' at the top of their political activities. Community work combines various kinds of activity directed at the provision of material as well as non-material benefits for the poor; the people who live in those rundown, poorest sections of the *gecekondus*. These people can be described as the poorest of the poor for whom without this kind of aid work survival would be much tougher. For example Halis from Aktepe neighbourhood explains:

We help those health workers who come to our quarter to carry out medical checks. We give a hand with the distribution of meal, coals, or coats for school children aged between 9 to 12. This year there were a lot of coats given to children. The meals are stopped now but bread is coming from the metropolitan municipality. We give some help for those poor who cannot pay their rent regardless of their party inclinations. Also this year there have been big quantities of dried food given away in the neighbourhood. One of my neighbours told me what he said to an activist from an other party who was canvassing in our quarter 'How can I vote for you while I am eating the meal and bread that is provided by the VP?' 'We also visit the sick and give a lot support if there is a funeral. In addition to these we as the neighbourhood committee take care of asphaltting the streets. If there is problem we call help from the metropolitan municipality. No doubt that all of this work helps our party's election performance in the quarter.

What we see from Halis's activities is that party activists are actively involved with very diverse elements of social work from helping, guiding the health professionals through the neighbourhood to distributing food or clothing aid from the municipality. By no means is Halis alone, Remzi Özal too talks about a wide variety of activities.

For example, we try to help those needs in material kind as well as in nonmaterial (spiritual) ways. If someone were very poor you would not do any thing spiritually. First you must feed him. At this moment in our neighbourhood bread has been distributed. The *halk ekmeği* (people's bread) continues. It is not just for the election. It was there before the election camping as well. What we are doing is searching for those poor people to

provide them at least bread and some hot meal. While we give this it is not that we are expecting anything from anyone. It is because they are human beings. If he gets food he can think then. The hungry cannot think at all. In these circumstances he would steal, deceive even rob to feed his children.

KD What else are you doing?

RÖ "We organise food give-aways every year round Ramadan. There are those who want to give their alms, so we collect from them and pass them onto the poor who are our brothers. Plus, this year there are some bursaries for school children. They can be given from primary to university level. It is around 3 Million TL for primary, 4 million TL for elementary, 6 million TL high schools and 7 million TL for the university students.

KD How about fuel; coal and wood?

RÖ Yes around half a tonne of coal and ten sacks of wood per household'.

As Özcan described their activities in the neighbourhood committee consists of some material benefits –food, fuel, clothing, bursaries as well as nonmaterial benefits like helping to find jobs, solving problems with the government offices. In a similar line M. Karaağaç from the same *ilce* pointed out that:

As VP devotees we meet like-minded people in our neighbourhood, hold discussions. Then those who have got some need come to us, because the metropolitan municipality governed by the VP people comes to us. Our neighbourhood is a very poor one. Most of its population are labourers. At least 50 per cent of them are day labourers. For this reason it is very poor and half of the households are tenants, renting houses. The rest has one gecekondü or nothing. Many people are unemployed. For this reason this community is in need of everything. People usually, do not want to ask for help, because they feel embarrassed but we know them and try to help them whatever we can.

In this first half M. Karaağaç gave some background information about the socioeconomic and demographic situation in his neighbourhood. The location of Kutlu is not so far from the wealthiest districts of Çankaya where the presidential palace and the high-ranking bureaucrats reside. Despite this physical closeness these districts are living on different planets. On the contrary to Kutlu's Third World standards, Çankaya has the living standards of major developed countries. As he stressed high unemployment and low income, and bad housing is common characteristic in Kutlu. Because of this bad socioeconomic situation many households are in constant need of basic materials like fuel during the winters, clothing, or food

and services. As he will explain using the resources of metropolitan municipality he and his friends organise charity work to ease the situation a little bit.

KD Approximately how many households received fuel (coal and wood) in Kutlu?

MK Last year it was approximately fifty families but I do not know for this year. This year rather than the neighbourhood executive committee the headmen are being giving more. Our neighbouring quarter of Mutlu received much of it this year. It all comes from the metropolitan municipality. At least ninety percent of this material- coal, wood, food comes from there.

KD How about the food?

MK The food packages include pasta, margarine, sugar, chickpeas, baked beans, rice, bulgur and tomato puree. In last year's list there were thirteen different items including omo [detergent] listed. The food bags usually, weigh around 30 kg or so. I gave them to people with my own hands last year. They would be enough for a month for a family, maybe more.

Also we got some bursaries and winter coats for children last year. For example, I myself registered fifty people alone last year. I gave fifteen of them in this school and also gave the rest of the forms to school. Poor people benefited from them a lot. The metropolitan municipality gave 20.000 bursaries last year. This year too, students will start to receive them. It was said that it will be up to 75.000 students but I do not know for sure. The amount of bursaries will be 7.5 million TL for university, 5 million for high schools and 3 million TL for primary schools.

KD Err it is very good that the municipality can afford it

MK Yes as I said the pious Muslims will find resources. If you employ 19.000 workers instead of 26.000, so he says I would use the money that previously paid for extra 6 to 7.000 workers. It makes much money. He [the mayor] says I will use that money for this kind of services. It has been said that there are around one thousand people that are paid but never come to the workplace. When you cut this vested money it will directly go to the municipality's safe. Plus there are businessmen who are good Muslims and want to help...

It is apparent that the VP's local organisations have been carrying out extensive and expensive charity work throughout the Ankara's gecekondu areas. The above three cases covers both sub-districts Keçiören and Mamak. As stated already the charity work is the highest scoring activity among the VP's political activists. The provision of certain e.g. goods food, fuel, clothing, bursary, and other non-material services and assistance seem to be unified across Ankara's many gecekondu areas. This indicates a

pattern of most fundamental needs of an ordinary gecekondü household. It is the very bad economic conditions in the gecekondü neighbourhoods that make them so dependent on this kind of community work.²⁹⁹

The welfare state, as in many other developing countries, is still very weak in Turkey. Provision of basic services from education to health, to electricity, roads, water etc., has been hampered by the neoliberal policies. The cities expanded beyond their physical boundaries. It was a direct consequence of rapid urbanization that started from the early 1980s. The influx of mass migration exhausted cities' industrial and services sectors. Already scarce resources for housing, health, education and so on are drowned by these waves of migration.³⁰⁰

In addition to this, with the implementation of the IMF's restructuring policies immigration from rural to urban has been accelerated. At the same time as if things were not bad enough the state reversed its traditional role in the economy in general and made huge cutbacks from its social policies. Everything was left to the correction of the 'market forces'. As the neoliberal policies progressed it badly affected millions of these new migrant families.³⁰¹ But we need to ask to what extent has this charity work of the VP grassroots been affective? Is it really significant and doing well for the poor as well as for the VP's electoral success?

7.4.1 A 'Messiah in the Making'

It seems that yes it does. According to Fazlı Dalli an activist from one of the poorest quarters of Keçiören, by organising charity work the VP shows that they are interested in people's daily problems. As he explains:

²⁹⁹ "The unemployment rate in cities reached 13 percent in April 1994; in October 1995, it was 10 per cent: State Institute of Statistics, Statistical Yearbook of Turkey 1996 (Ankara: SIS Publication, 1997), 280; many of the unemployed live in squatter settlements. In metropolitan cities, the wealthiest one-fifth of the population receives 57.2 percent of the national revenue, whereas the poorest one-fifth of the population receives only 4.8 percent of the national revenue: State Institute of Statistics, Statistical Yearbook of Turkey 1996, and 629." (Quoted in Erman T, 1998:561)

³⁰⁰ For a detailed account of migration from rural-to-urban and its socioeconomic and political consequences see CHAPTER 4.

³⁰¹ There are writers who saw a very strong connection between the neoliberal restructuring in Turkey in the post-1980 and the rise of the Welfare party to power. See for example Öniş, Z (1997).

Our approach to people is to make friends, and show compassion. As a neighbourhood organisation we get some goods for charity, and distribute them regardless of the party affiliations. Usually we get coal, food, bursaries and clothing for the students and bread to distribute in here. In our neighbourhood there are currently 300 families, which get four loaves bread per family a day. So it makes 1200 loaves of bread per day. For instance there are many people who wait for long time in the cheap bread queue. It shows that those people need to buy bread cheaper than they normally do elsewhere. Now if it was the ANAP (Motherland Party) not us who were distributing this aid they would vote for them not for us. But by doing this you show that at least you are interested in their problems.

The impact of these charities can be interpreted in many different ways. The material benefits- food, fuel, medical aid etc., - must carry a variety of values within. Surely, these charity works contain basic values like use-value, exchange value, but there is more in them such as the 'social use- values'.³⁰² Also, it must be valuable for the VP itself because in return it will reap the benefit in terms of votes. On the one hand those material benefits contribute to ease the daily struggle of the poor households for a while, however small and palliative they may be. On the other hand they show that there is someone who cares about the lives of these poor families. At least someone is interested in his or her life conditions

It also credits the VP as being the party of the poor. It creates a future vision where the VP that already helps or seems to be concerned with the problems of the poor, will bring the justice, equality and prosperity that has been denied them for so long. What the opponents of the VP have been doing at most is proposing a free market economy that is not addressing the pressing economic problems of large sections of society. But the VP not only has its charity works but also its unique economic program called *Adil Düzen* (Just Society). The rhetoric of the Just Society appeals to the millions of the lower middle and lower classes from right and left. With this program the WP has managed to get the support of the traditionally leftist voters who have been disillusioned with leftist parties since the mid-1980s. As is evident from community work in the neighbourhoods the VP is not just promising but also doing it as much as it can, even before it is in government. In one sense the charity work seems to provide double- benefit for the party: it doing something in the present yet promising much more in the future.

³⁰² For the concept of value and its varieties see Marx, K Capital Vol. 1:131.

It can be argued that social solidarity is always seen as one of the most precious aspects of social life and always seen as the first condition of a 'good society'. As societies change, and advance from one form to another the aspects of solidarity change too but interestingly enough there is always a common and constant desire for more of it. In the case of the VP, solidarity takes material as well as nonmaterial forms.

By no means this is unique to Turkish Islamists. Many Muslim countries have been facing similar social problems to those of Turkey in terms of rapid urbanisation and population growth.³⁰³ Throughout the Muslim world, Islamic parties and groups are well aware of the problems of the majority of the population and are organising charity work to provide similar material benefits; setting up health clinics, schools, soup-kitchens shelter, and so forth.

The source of the financing of the WP and later its successor the VP has been discussed and speculated about a lot. It must be said that one of the main financial sources of funding of the political parties is the state itself. According to the Turkish constitution (1982) and the article 69 of the law of political parties (2820), parties are entitled to receive state funding. The conditions and the amount of the financial aid that parties would be entitled to and granted have been changing considerably however it is usually those parties which received at least 7 percent of the total votes which are eligible to receive the money. It has been calculated that between 50 – 90 percent of the parties' total income comes through the state funding.³⁰⁴ Because the largest parties in the parliament have often changed the conditions and amount of the financial aid, it is they who benefit most of it. Therefore, it is plausible to argue that, throughout the 1990s, as one of the largest parties in the parliament the WP/VP has been benefiting considerably from this state funding.

Another serious source of the finance has been the transformation of the traditional Anatolian bourgeoisie that had a massive impact on the rise of the WP via financial as

³⁰³ See Roy, 1994, pp. 51-55; see also, Moussalli, 1998; Kepel, 1994: Chapter 1

³⁰⁴ See http://www.tesev.org.tr/projeler/siyasi_parti_metin_tebliğ24.php.

well as political support. Throughout the 1980s Turkey developed a much closer connection with the long neglected Muslim countries. In particular, the Arab countries such as Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, UAE, and Qatar who were very instrumental for financial reasons. During this period for the first time 'green Dollars' were given a green light to come for investment in various sectors. Islamic Banking like Al Baraka Turk a Saudi Turkish financial venture started to operate. The Saudi authorities were especially generous in supporting new Mosques, Koran schools, Student hostels run by the religious Vakifs and brotherhoods and religious colleges. In short the Saudis generously supported anything in the name of the religion of Islam. The Islamist business circles also opened up for credit or joint investment through their long existing but weak ties with their rich religious brothers in Arab countries.

The second leg of the rise of the Islamist bourgeoisie was the well-managed flow of the savings of the Turkish migrant workers in various European countries via various religious groups, brotherhoods and Islamic business associations. The 'Petrol -Dollar' connection with the rich Arab countries and the savings of the Turkish migrant workers were two crucial external factors for the rise of Islamist capital. At the same time during the 1980s and 90s there were internal factors also contributing to the transformation of some elements of the Anatolian bourgeoisie.

What can be said lastly is that these charity works also indicate a widespread networking including metropolitan municipality, district municipalities, Islamic business groups, various political and non-political groups, brotherhoods, Islamic trusts, trade unions and associations. In other words through these networks the VP has been financing its activities as well as its charity works.

Around one fifth (19 %) of my informants said that they attend the house meetings (visits). Although my findings show otherwise, house-to-house or door-to-door visits are actually the most common and most reported type of canvassing by the VP. Obviously door-to-door canvassing is like face-to-face contacts, which are the most effective way of affecting someone's party preferences. As Metin Toker one of Turkey's most prominent political commentators observed, during the 1999 election campaign, 'the most effective election campaign activity of a candidate in Turkey is

still to go around shop-to-shop, door-to-door, teahouse-to-teahouse to shake voters' hands.'³⁰⁵

The house meetings are valued as a more intimate, informal and private way of meeting potential voters. As mentioned according to its public relations booklet the activists are encouraged to make visits and organise house meetings. The neighbourhood representatives or members in the neighbourhoods usually arrange them. It was observed that house meetings increase considerably before the elections. I have on occasion attended four of such meetings in one night from 7 pm to 12 pm. Especially during the election campaigning these meetings are attended by the candidates for various posts and he/she makes a speech explaining policies and appeals for support. In return those who attended would ask a variety of questions about his policies, employment opportunities in the municipality, the needs of the particular gecekondu settlements road, asphalt, water etc. It sometimes turns into a kind of negotiation between the candidate and the residents of the neighbourhood over the services that would be provided if he gets elected to do this he needs their votes.

But this is more likely during the election campaigning. In normal times these house meetings are more educative. Normally they are like a sermon where a *hatip* (preacher/ good speaker) would be invited to talk about daily political or economic issues. He would start off with religious matters and explain some issues if asked by the audience. As well as the house meetings the VP's activists are very keen to make social visits and attend mourning gatherings.

Fifteen percent of my informants said that most of their political activism consists of weekly meetings. Weekly meetings are the meetings that the neighbourhood executive committee held every Thursday or Sundays. It lasts about two and a half hours. All members of the neighbourhood committee attend these meetings, where the previous week's action plan is assessed. The daily issues are discussed and the next week's action plan is prepared. All activists in the neighbourhood have been carried out in cooperation with the *ilçe*'s executive committee and usually a representative attends these weekly meetings. After the plan and assessment, the urgent tasks e.g.

³⁰⁵ See Istanbul daily Milliyet, 13 Nisan 1999 "El sıkmanın 1001 fazileti" (13 April 1999, The 1001 virtue of the shaking hand).

visiting the sick, attending funerals, weddings etc are allocated among the members. Although it seems this activism is less active, the planning and coordination are carried out in these meetings.

Some 12 percent of my activists said the commonest form of activism for them was through social visits. If there is a wedding or engagement celebration, celebration of circumcision of the young boys, someone goes to the military service, someone is ill or there is a funeral, they would visit these households to join the celebration or share the grief. As Yahya Konuk pointed out, these activities such as visiting the ill attending the wedding ceremonies or visiting those households where someone is going to join the army to say goodbye' are the 'things that people like.' (Ibid). As the gecekondü population consists of new migrants from rural areas, they are used to close communal ties and seeking to simulate these relations in the gecekondü areas. As can be expected the gecekondü population is not an urbanised community but more like a rural community. They are in transition in most cases and for some writers they are 'in-between -neither villagers nor urbanites'.³⁰⁶

It must be said that the VP's grassroots activists are well aware of the centrality of the traditional rural values for the gecekondü dwellers and the importance of following rural traditions and costumes. When they attend these gatherings they usually take a present for the bride and groom, at least a flower. If they visit a patient they take something to eat, some flowers or a cologne and so on. Among their visits the most important one is their help with funerals. None of the other parties are as well armed to cope with death as the VP's grassroots. In fact most of the centre-right and leftist parties are secular and their activists do not have any coping mechanism against the death. On the contrary, because of their Islamic identities, VP activists are very good at coping with this kind of crisis.

But more than that they are instrumental in organising the funeral itself. As some of them said, they do not think it is a trivial issue at all. Today, it is very difficult to find a convenient and inexpensive grave in Ankara. It costs at least half a billion TL (£ 750) and most of these people are unable to pay it at all. What we do is done through

³⁰⁶ See Erman, 1998, pp. 552-553.

our friends and with the help of metropolitan municipalities we arrange gravesites, and help with expenses, transport as well as feeding the crowd afterwards. When someone dies in a family people are almost incapable of doing anything so by offering this kind of help we win his or her hearts and friendship. 'People say you are closer to me more than my brother' says the representative of Şehit Kubilay neighbourhood.

The fact that activists are themselves from rural Anatolia who came usually at a young age and never left the gecekondü communities. This may make it much easier for them to know the importance of the traditional, cultural and religious costumes in their own surroundings. Being familiar or growing up with the same customs, traditions and certain regional codes gives them an advantage compared to the other party activists. In fact social visiting on the whole is a part of the good relations that activists are very keen to maintain.

10 percent of my informants give priority to developing and maintaining good relations with potential voters. This aspect is very important in various ways. Having a good relationship is itself a very effective means of influencing people's attitudes. As already mentioned the gecekondü communities have predominantly rural characteristics and first group relations and close community ties are still the dominant form. In this context developing good, close friendly relations are a prerequisite for a successful local party organisation.

The VP has been building its success through its skilful approach to voters. To do this the community leaders- neighbourhood representatives have been chosen often through examination. Those who are known for their qualities of seriousness trustworthiness and religious devotion are encouraged to come forward as neighbourhood representatives. The members of the executive committees are also chosen from among respected members of the community. In addition the VP has been paying special attention to winning the hearts of people before winning their minds and possibly votes. Its strategy is to build bedrock of good relationships with the electorate slowly but steadily.

A good relationship is more difficult to achieve than it sounds for a political party competing with many others. In order develop a good relationship in a community the

activists must have very good communication skills, be good at observing, caring and willing to volunteer, devoting much time and energy to political activities.

Some eight percent of my informants gave priority to educating people as a political activity. This method of campaign activism is more in line with the new ways of campaigning. This activity consists of propaganda, counter propaganda, displaying posters, party flags, distributing leaflets etc., all around the sub-district.³⁰⁷ They are predominantly from the party's youth committee and these activities require more energy than others. The other neighbourhood committees also carry out these tasks when needed. particularly during the election campaigns these activities intensify.

After the election the youth committee adopts more community work type activities. As Hasan stated "In two years the number in the youth committee increased from ten to 450. They organised charity work worth 7 bn TL (£10.000) in eight months. There is no street that they have not been to in all of 62 neighbourhoods in Mamak.' (Hasan, member of Mamak Youth Committee). This itself shows how the youth committee are active and engaging in similar activities as the other activists do outside election times.

To make sense of this data we need to compare it with similar material from other countries and with other academic studies. Unfortunately there is no single Turkish study of grassroots activism or study of the effects of the party organisation on the electoral process. Giving this practical difficulty I must compare my findings with studies from Britain and America.

7.5 Comparing British, American and Turkish Activists

A study on the British Labour party revealed that only 44 percent of the Labour party's activists said they frequently had contact with each other. Some 10 percent did not do anything at all while 17 percent did and 29 percent met people occasionally. Another criterion for party activism is the frequency of attendance at party meetings.

³⁰⁷ See interviews with Remzi from Şirintepe neighbourhood and Hasan member of the Mamak İlçe youth committee.

Compared to their level of activism in their local branch or constituency, Labour party activists attended far less Labour party meetings. Some 36 percent of the activists said they had not attended any Labour party meeting in the last year, while only 30 percent said they attended frequently. Twenty percent said they attended these meetings occasionally and the other 14 percent replied that they did so rarely. (Seyd and Whiteley, 1992, p. 89).

Again when asked “how much time do you devote to party activities in the average month?” Fifty per cent of them replied none, less than one-in-three (30 per cent) said

Table: 7.5 what did you do before 1997 General Elections?

‘Thinking about the 1997 General Election, we would like to ask you about your activities during the campaign. Did you:

Activity	Percentage of Respondents saying ‘Yes’	
	Labour	Lib Dems
Display an election poster	78	70
Donate money to party election funds	64	71
Help to run an election day committee room	17	19
Drive voters to the polling station	17	19
Take numbers at the polling station	26	36
Remind voters to vote on polling day	45	27
Attend the count/celebrating party	12	22

Source: Whiteley and Seyd, 1999, p. 30.

up to five hours, while 10 percent replied between five and ten hours. Only 4 percent said they spent ten to fifteen hours, while as few as 2 percent said fifteen to twenty hours and just 4 percent spent more than twenty hours on party activities in the average month (Ibid, p. 88). However the Labour and the Liberal Democrat party activists did much better during the last general election campaign in 1997.

Table 7.5 shows that both Labour and Liberal Democrats activists were involved in various sorts of campaign activities. Some of them were highly active. Over three-quarters of both party’s activists displayed an election poster and around 70 percent donated money to their party. But when it comes to the more costly, in terms of time,

activities the rate falls to one-quarter or lower. For example a fifth of activists from both parties drove voters to the polling station.

Table: 7. 6 How active they were during the 1997 election campaign?

Activity	Not at all		once or more	
	Labour	Lib Dem	Labour	Lib Dem
Telephone canvass voters	90	94	10	6
Canvass voters door-to-door	76	76	24	24
Help with a fund-raising event	80	74	20	26
Deliver party leaflets	52	46	48	54
Attend a party rally	78	78	22	22
Helped organise a street stall	91	96	9	4
Help with party mailings	79	75	21	25
Help with telephone fund-raising	98	98	2	2

Source: Same as above

Table: 7.6 shows that 10 percent of the Labours and 6 percent of Lib Dem activists telephone canvassed voters once or more. In the case of door-to-door canvassing the figure rises up to a quarter. Some 24 percent of activists from both parties canvassed voters by going door-to-door which is a very effective way of influencing people's political preferences, while 20 percent of Labour's and 26 percent of Lib Dem activists helped with a fund-raising event. More than half (52 %) of Lib. Dem and 48 percent of the Labour activists delivered party leaflets while 22 percent of both party activists attended a party rally. Another (21 percent Labour and 25 per cent Lib. Dem) of them helped with party mailings. There are activities that attracted very low-level of attendance. Nine (9 %) percent of Labour and 4 percent of Lib Dem activists helped with party mail shots.

It seems that except for 'delivering party leaflets' three quarters of party activists from both parties stayed inactive, while 25 percent of them were active. Nevertheless this 25 percent comprises thousands of party activists who, as shown in both Tables, are highly active. For this reason as Whiteley and Seyd (1999) argued they had a very considerable impact on Labour's landslide election victory in the 1997 general elections. Nevertheless, which as in the British context they seem very active compared to the VP's activists they lagged far behind.

In America most parties are not bureaucratic or hierarchically run organisations. Their leaders and activists are part time volunteers; there is no permanent headquarters or paid staff. Unlike the VP's activists in Turkey their activity is not a year round phenomenon, but rather cyclical, and concentrated around the campaign season. However, contrary to the common belief that parties have been declining or may even be dead, case studies of local parties proved otherwise. 'A case study of Cuyahoga County (Cleveland), Ohio, showed that pericent leaders were at least as active in 1981 in attending meetings, registering voters, distributing literature, and getting out the vote as they had been in the mid-1970s. Similarly in Middlesex County, New Jersey, two thirds of the district leaders reported that they worked at least six hours a week for the party during campaigns and over 40 percent indicated that they often engaged in voter registration, telephone canvassing, and door-to-door canvassing.' (Bibby, 1987, pp.104-105).

While these figures are higher than conventional wisdom would suggest (Seyd and Whiteley, 1992, p. 90) they are not as impressive as the level of political activism carried out by the VP's grassroots activists. If we compare the amount of party activity carried out by party activists in Britain, America and Turkey it is clear that the VP's activists in Turkey are far more active than the British and American party activists.

7.5 Conclusion

In this chapter I have tried to examine the affects of grassroots activism on electoral outcome. The first half of this chapter is devoted to the theoretical arguments. It was argued that there is not a unified approach but instead two distinct competing approaches. According to the proponents of the 'counter' argument political parties have lost their historical role as the means of electoral canvassing. Many explained the decline of party organisation as the result of technological television – candidate centred campaigns built on the polls and run by the media and public relations experts (see Crotty and Jacobson, 1980, p. 65). Others like Huckshorn (1984, p. 130) argued that this change came not only from technological changes but also socio-political changes since the Second World War. It was argued that instead of large membership

parties the parties have fewer members, even in many cases without a membership organisation at all. For them politics is evolving from 'party centred' to 'candidate centred' politics. So in this new era the candidate is expected to perform whatever the local party organisations have been doing. However many political scientists have challenged this approach. They argue that contrary to the counter argument party organisations have continued to be very influential on the parties' electoral fortunes. (See Crotty, 1971; Huckfeldt and Sprague, 1992). In line with the theoretical explanations there is substantial empirical evidence supporting the claims of the continuing effectiveness of party organisations. For example Whiteley and Seyd (1998) discovered that Labour's landslide election victory in the last general election (1997) was in fact the work of Labour's renewed energetic militant grassroots activists.

Also I have reviewed other case studies from Canada (see Clarke, H et al 2000) and the United States (see Crotty, 1971; Huckfeldt and Sprague, 1992). In addition to these studies from different Western countries my own observations have led me to think that there is a strong correlation between a party's electoral fortunes and its grassroots activism. As discussed already, having a large membership organisation would only contribute to the strength of that party not the other way around. The arguments like the high cost of maintaining larger membership organisations are unconvincing.

Wherever it is fought and whatever technologies are available every election campaign needs manpower to canvass door-to-door, deliver party leaflets, post the party mail, attend party rallies, telephone canvass voters, drive voters to polling station and the like. Every party needs party activists to go door-to-door canvassing, recruit new members, and listen to people and report back, to spread the party's message, policies and ideology. All this requires active members ready to spend long hours and energy for party causes. ³⁰⁸

³⁰⁸ As the latest (2000) closely fought Presidential election in America showed however developed a country is and whatever sophisticated campaigning technology is available without the active members who are actively and devotedly putting their effort the election will not be won.

The influence of local party organisations is especially enhanced under certain conditions: declining partisan attachments, declining party loyalties, and increased electoral swings. In other words, if there are many people leaving their parties for one reason or another, they will choose other parties. In this case a party with a large grassroots organisation will be in a better position to persuade new voters through face-to-face encounters. We know that those who are personally contacted are inclined to be more active and change their party preferences (See chapter 5).

Returning to the central issue of the effects of the VP's grassroots activists on the party's electoral outcomes, I shall start with levels of activity. Turkish activists tend to be more active than British and American activists. Although there are differences of technique it is possible to gauge the frequency, duration and effectiveness of political activism. Compared to the British and American activists my informants contact potential voters more frequently and they spend much longer hours in an ordinary month on political activities. Obviously the type of campaign activities differ between Turkey, Britain and America as this is to be expected, but British and American activists are far less effective or essential for vote canvassing. For canvassing method and strategy the VP's activists choose more intimate, less formal ways of meeting with people from their constituencies. For example rather than distributing leaflets they organise house meetings and instead of telephone canvassing they prefer face-to-face meetings.

Why are the VP's activists more active? In chapter 5, I examined the most important reasons for an activist to become a member of the VP. It was observed that 62 percent of them gave religious and ideological reasons. These findings suggested that the majority of them are ideologically radical. For many it is actually a way of serving their ideological goals, and for others it serves to their Islamic cause. So this conviction makes them more active than ordinary members or other party activists. In addition to religious and ideological reasons I have also identified other socioeconomic and demographic predictors of political participation such as family orientation, regional differences, education, and residential characteristics. The incentives for becoming members also drive them to become activists. Again it is a well-known fact that those with strong ideological convictions tend to participate more in various forms of politics and political activism is one of them.

It is already established that they are very active but is this enough to boost the party's electoral fortunes? The answer is no, not by itself. What is also important is what they do and how they do it in their respective constituencies. It has been argued that the VP's activists combine different methods, techniques, strategy and tactics to win people's hearts, minds and then their votes. Actually this order is very important. As some of my informants asserted they are among the people. They are not like other parties that knock on people's doors once every four or five years, but are always with the people. Their activism is a year-round activity rather than merely during the election periods. They visit households on many social occasions; offer help in times of crisis show solidarity, compassion and sympathy.

The provision of material benefits; food, coal, clothing, bursaries for school children, health care and medical aid, assisting people to find jobs, or solve problems in the government offices, is the primary activity (37 per cent) among the VP's neighbourhood committees.

The *gecekondus* are the poorest sections of the urban areas where high rates of unemployment, poverty, high birth rate and infant mortality, and high rate of petty crime, combined with low levels of education and income, bad housing conditions, poor provision of basic public services - health care, school, roads, electricity and tap , etc., are common characteristics. In those areas those lucky enough to find employment mostly work for very low wages covering only a third of the minimum food cost of a family of four in a month.³⁰⁹ Hence the methods and means of party

³⁰⁹ According to a recent Turk Is economic report the minimum wage covers one third of the minimum food expenses of a family of four. In this report it was calculated that for a family of four the poverty

activism are a reflection of the socioeconomic conditions of the electorate. I do not think that the choice of charity work is contrived by the VP's local organisations but has developed out of necessity.

It appears that social work and political activism go hand in hand. The VP's grassroots activists effectively combine social work and political activism. They are well balanced and complete each other. Due to their community work they are viewed as compassionate really caring about the problems of the community. Activists visit government offices, solve bureaucratic problems and improve services through the municipality and other agencies. On the other hand because of social work and caring image the WP/VP has been elevated to the level of the messiah; 'a messiah in the making'. If the VP's representative were a real professional social worker he might have done a lot better for the welfare of the poor and needy, but he would not be the same person who would possess, via elections, the governmental power able to create a 'better society and a better future'. After all a social worker is a social worker but a VP activist is a social worker as well as someone who can change everything through political means. So he is in fact up to a point 'a -would be Messiah in the making.

Finally it can be argued that one of the most unique characteristics of the WP/VP's party organisation is that it combines both the 'modern' and 'traditional'. In very few areas is the mixture of modern and traditional so effectively used to create such a positive and effective outcome?

line is 668 m TL (£417.50) and minimum food expense for family of four is 228 m TL (£142. 50) but the current minimum wage is 78 m TL (See ntvmsnbc.com, News room 28 and 30 th May 2001). The minimum wage will go up to 107 m TL net from the first of July 2001.

CHAPTER EIGHT

CONCLUSION: FUNDAMENTALISM

DEMYSTIFIED

NEOLIBERALISM, GROWTH OF GECEKONDUS AND THE WP/VP AS THE ‘CHAMPION’ OF EQUALITY AND JUSTICE

8.1 Islamic Fundamentalism: A Misplaced Categorisation

The unprecedented rise of the Welfare Party in the local elections (March 1994) created an atmosphere of shock and fear across the political spectrum from conservative, neo-liberalist circles on the right to the extreme radical end of the left the Maoist and Stalinist groups, from the poor working girls of the textile factories, to the most prominent ladies of Turkish high society it caused a shock and anxiety that would only be caused by an avalanche or a landslide”³¹⁰... In that election the WP won astonishing numbers of municipalities including the largest metropolitans Istanbul and Ankara.

The last two decades of the twentieth century witnessed an unprecedented rise in religious fundamentalism. Fundamentalist movements have been on the rise in all faiths of the world (Jurgensmeyer, 1993, pp. 11-18; Kepel, 1994, pp. 6-7). Among them Islamic fundamentalism has been given a very special place (Halliday, 1996). For many, Islamic revivalism poses a multiple threat; from political to military; cultural to demographic and because of the oil reserves concentrated in the Middle East an economic threat as well. For some conservative, rightwing writers like Huntington (1994) and Lewis (1990) Islamic fundamentalism is a threat to Western

³¹⁰ Laçiner, 1994, pp. 3-4 quoted in Tosun, 1999, p. 186; See also Heper and Demirer, 1996, pp. 109-123.

interests and civilisation. It is the Green Menace that has replaced the Red Menace of the Soviet Russia (See Esposito, 1995, p. 5). For some other writers, these fundamentalist movements are anti-modernist living in a bygone age and wanting to turn the clock back to 700 AD the time of the Prophet Muhammed. According to postmodernist students of political Islam, Islamist movements are the product of post-modern conditions (Akbar, 1992 And Gulalp, 1995).

However many of these approaches and studies have misinterpreted the reactions that these movements demonstrate and totally neglect their preconditions by focusing entirely on an 'imagined threat' from these movements. In other words the majority of writers and the western media have been portraying these movements as 'extremist', 'terrorist', "intolerant," or 'irrational' without paying any attention to the sociological realities and conditions in which they emerged. Mostly readers are informed again and again about how they are religious zealots, intolerant villains, Islamic fundamentalists, without having a glimpse of the conditions that bred these movements or what their aims and ideologies are. As Halliday (1996) and Esposito (1995) point out they are often not a threat to anyone or to western civilisation and the western way of life, nor are they made up of extremist, intolerant zealots, but are a reaction to their own governments, which are often antidemocratic, corrupt and incompetent. They are also a reaction against the foreign domination and influence that the Muslim societies have been subjected for a long time (Halliday, 1995a, p. 48; see also Demirer, 1998, pp.66-69).

I am not suggesting that the rise of political Islam is entirely independent from the trend of religious revivalism across the Muslim world. It is not, but in connection with the unprecedented rise of the political Islam in Turkey the effect of religious revivalism is much smaller compared to the effects of grassroots activism on the WP/VP's electoral success.

There are scholars of Islamic movements who disagree with mainstream western approaches and suggest that the Islamic movements are not simply engaging in re-Islamization or restoring religious fundamentalism. Rather they are rising in the context of economic and social crisis; unemployment, poor income dispersal among the lower and middle lower classes, the growing gap between poor and rich; rapid

urbanisation, and inadequate government services. In addition, these countries are notorious for their oppressive, corrupt, anti - democratic nature and bad human right records. (See Caplan, 1987, p. 5; Halliday, 1995a, p. 49; Keddie, 1981, pp. 244 - 245; Bulliet 1993, p. 39; Salt 1995, p. 24; Roy, 1994, p. 4, and 48 - 53).

At the beginning of this study it was said that the majority of the Turkish elites have failed to correctly identify the underlying causes of the rise of political Islam. Instead they labelled political Islam as Islamic fundamentalism and concentrated on its supposedly “extremist”, “irrational”, “intolerant”, “anti modern”, “anti secular”, “anti Kemalist”, or “anti positivist” characteristics. It can be argued that the majority of the Turkish elite, of all political persuasions; Kemalists, secularists, radicals, socialists, liberals and even the conservatives have miss conceptualised and misdiagnosed the rise of political Islam as purely Islamic revivalism.

In Turkey the discourse of political Islam has revolved around the axis of *laicism-anti-laicism* (secularism- anti-secularism), modernism–anti modernism, positivism versus idealism that found its roots in Enlightenment philosophy and the French revolution.

The foundations of the Turkish secularists’ arguments come mainly from Kemalist ideology and its positivist philosophy limited to a few basic principles like the dismissal of the existence of God and holding religion responsible or blaming Islam for the underdevelopment of Turkish society and economy. It sees a simple continuation of the historical contention between progressivism and traditionalism. In like manner, Turkish leftists and Socialists writers take the same line and are far from contributing a new dimension into this old discourse.³¹¹

As stated before the rise of the WP created enormous anxiety, disbelief and dismay among the secularist elite and led to political tension in the country. Some argued the rise of the WP posed an immediate threat to the century old modernisation project, the fundamentals of modern Turkey: modernisation, Westernisation, secularisation and the modern way of life. As in the West, so in Turkey the rise of the Islamic

³¹¹ Akçam, 1994, pp. 7-8.

movement has been seen as anti-modern, irrational, extremist, and a threat to the Kemalist republic. For instance according to İlhan Selçuk, one of the most prominent Kemalist writers of the centre-left daily *Cumhuriyet* (republic), Islamic Fundamentalists are the biggest threat to Atatürk's laik (secularist) republic, Kemalist modern revolution, and Atatürk's principles; democracy, nationalism and the Enlightenment of Turkish society, rights of Turkish women, progress of science and a progressive education system (see *Cumhuriyet*, 20 January 1996).³¹² Another *Cumhuriyet* writer Hikmet Çetinkaya (1996, p. 47) points out that fundamentalism has been rising in all Middle Eastern countries. As in Egypt, Algeria and many other countries the Islamic extremists' organisations have been gaining speed. But there is an effort, he says, to cover this development and our ex-socialist traitors are collaborating with Islamic fundamentalists to take Turkey into the dark ages. He argued that there are some liberal intellectuals who see the WP as moderate Islam but they are being deceived.

Similarly, Sara Gul Turan, in her book *Köktenrefah* (Fundi-Welfare), complains to Atatürk, the founder of modern Turkey, that reactionary conservatism and Islamic fundamentalism has been rising in the country not step by step but in a fast marching tempo. She adds that Turkey has been drawn into the quagmire of religious reactionarism by right wing governments. (1996, p. 17) Some argued that once the WP comes to power it would not relinquish it.

Server Tanilli (1996) a prominent intellectual of the left views the ascension of the WP in the context of the rise of Islamic fundamentalism occurring in many other Muslim countries. For him some of these movements are refusing to compromise on their principles to live in peace with the secular republican regime. So, he says, the time has come for an ideological battle to save not only the institutions of the secularist republic but also all of the values of the 150-year-old Turkish Enlightenment movement, because they are under threat from Islamic movements. (1996, p. 9). For Tanilli there is no democracy in Islam and wherever Islamic fundamentalism thrives freedom, democracy and pluralism have suffered (ibid, p.

³¹² Also see his two other articles on Islamic fundamentalism in Turkey: Selçuk, İ (20 July 1996) Daily *Cumhuriyet*; "Siyahın da Siyahı Var" (There is black of black); (6 August 1996), "Mürteci ile Müslüman" (Fundamentalist and Muslim).

212). In his book Tanilli takes an eclectic Marxist and Kemalist approach toward religions in general and Islam specifically. One may agree with some of his critique of religion in general but it seems Tanilli makes no effort to identify the sociological basis of the rising popularity of political Islam in Turkey and elsewhere. It seems that Tanilli explains the rise of Islamic movements in many Muslim countries including Turkey almost as a matter of conspiracy plotted by the USA during the Cold War era with the local collaborators chiefly Saudi Arabia, Egypt and other governments to prevent the Enlightenment/ awakening and progress of the people of these countries, crush the leftist movements and keep the USSR out of the Middle East. However, he seems to forget that although external factors are important, in reality very rarely are they the defining factors of a social phenomenon.

He argues that “Actually, the one and only thing that this [Islamic] ideology and its followers have been doing is to resist progress and try to turn the clock back, to take the society backward.” (Ibid: 173). Regarding the situation in Turkey, he points out that the real agenda of political Islam is not the freedom of belief or religious practices, which in the first place must be kept in the individual/private sphere. Their real aim is to destroy the democratic and secular republic, civil code, and other reforms; chiefly women’s rights and other gains of the 150 year old movement of the Enlightenment. (Ibid: 181). It must be said that this is a point universally shared by leftists, socialists, liberals and radical secularist intellectuals in Turkey. Tanilli’s point of view is very important because as an established academic and thinker of the left, a Marxist with a heavy Kemalist influence he reflects quite clearly both the Marxists’ and Kemalists’ standpoint in relation to the rise of political Islam in Turkey

For many other radical secularist intellectuals the rise of the WP in the 1990s represented nothing but the threat of Islamic fundamentalism. For them the biggest threat to the republican regime comes from Islamic fundamentalism. One of the most common causes of the rise of political Islam, for this group, is the promiscuous policies of consecutive right wing governments toward Islam since the 1950s. It argued that these governments have been nurturing, protecting even encouraging Islamic ideology for electoral purposes and political manipulation. For them in a true secular state religion must be separated from the state and this has not been the case in Turkey. They usually argued that the last fifty years right wing parties have

dominated the Turkish polity and they all compromised the principle of secularism for the sake of votes (See Çetinkaya, 1996, pp. 91-92; Ekşi, 1995, p. 15; Tuşalp, 1994, p. 23). It is true that right wing governments especially after the 1960s gave some concessions to the Islamists' demands like opening Imam-Hatip (religious) schools, Koran courses but it can be interpreted as the reason rather than as a result of an ongoing process.

Traditionally, Turkish 'progressive' intellectuals comprise a wide range of radical secularists, liberals, various socialists' tendencies, and radicals have regarded religion merely as a relic of the past. By doing so they underestimated the historical, cultural, political and social importance of Islam as one of the key elements of society in Turkey. Maybe this dismissive attitude prevalent among the Turkish elite has been due to the militant secularism of the state itself since the 1920s. As is well known the principle of secularism has always been the most sacred principle of republican Turkey. It has been given the status of the foundation stone of the republic and has been protected by a special decree in all constitutions.

At this juncture it is important to recall that the Turkish modernist approach or radical secularist approach toward political Islam has been shared by most sections of the ruling classes: influential military and bureaucratic elites and upper classes of Turkey.

It appears that Turkish modernist interpretations share the same wisdom with the Western modernist approaches of political Islam. Both approaches have been unable to correctly diagnose the nature of political Islam, or to grasp the underlying causes behind its increasing popularity. The first problem they face is their lack of understanding of the modern character of political Islam. Secondly they fail to see the causes of discontent of the masses with the present establishment. In other words they defend the values of modernity, secularism, and the principles of Ataturk's revolution but fail to discuss the particular socioeconomic and political preconditions of the rise of political Islam (Delibaş, 1996, p. 27).

Another common characteristic in their writing is a visible, blunt sense of fear, anxiety and shock due to the unprecedented success of the WP in the local elections of 1994 and a year later in the general elections of 1995. Again instead of critical

analysis of the conditions in which this widespread disillusionment of large sections of the society with the current political parties of centre-right and centre-left the discourses have concentrated on distrust, fear and a confrontation between modernist secularism and Islamic fundamentalism.

According to Metin Heper “The radical secularists in Turkey view as “irrational” virtually any kind of preoccupation with Islam. They perceive Islam as the antonym of enlightenment, and have adopted a hostile attitude towards it. ... Not only have the radical secularists in Turkey failed to realise the significance of Islam for the people- inter alia, as a source of belief, ethics, identity and/or consolation- but they have also exaggerated the Islamist threat to the Turkish secular democratic state.” (1997, p. 42).

As highlighted above the radical secularists tend to see the relationship between the masses and religion as merely a hobby.³¹³ Therefore any kind of preoccupation with Islam seems to be irrational. Perhaps the most significant aspect of this process is that the rise of the WP in the mid 1990s has been seen as an exaggerated Islamic threat to the secular republic. As this view has been prevalent among radical secularists, the bureaucratic and military elite and other elements of the ruling classes, it has caused one of the deepest political crises of recent history in Turkey. Due to a largely unfounded fear of Islamic fundamentalism the secularist elite reacted fiercely to the Islamist led coalition government and this confrontation caused a serious political crisis that ended with the 28 February process: a postmodern coup.

The majority of Turkish elites as the only organised representative of political Islam in Turkey has equated the Welfare/Virtue Party with religious fundamentalism. It can be argued that the categorisation of political Islam as fundamentalism has been a misplaced conceptualisation and it shows how the Turkish elite makes sense of political Islam.

The concept of fundamentalism does not explain much about the movements itself but demeans them as fanatics, extremists or reactionaries. As Frank Furedi (1995:18-19) points out that:

³¹³ Çakır, 1994, p.108.

The uncritical acceptance of the term fundamentalism by conservative, liberal and radical commentators is symptomatic of the way in which a 'them' and 'us' outlook on the world has become intellectually plausible. At its most banal, this outlook proposes that they are irrational while we are rational or that they are intolerant while we are permissive. The fundamentalist label provides a moral and cultural condemnation of millions of people... At its simplest, the fundamentalist label helps to recycle the old Orientalist stereotypes about fanatical, frustrated people.

First of all the usage of the concept of fundamentalism has been highly contentious. These scholars such as Bruce Lawrence, Henry Munson, Leonard Binder, and Bernard Lewis have used 'fundamentalism' as a key descriptive concept however, as Campo (1995) argued these scholars are not in agreement about the term "fundamentalism". Moreover, those who have been using the term fundamentalism, and applying it to 'Islamic fundamentalist' movements, have so far been unable to produce a satisfactory answer to the major criticism about using a term that originated from the 1920s American Protestant fundamentalist movement.³¹⁴

8.1.1 What purpose does labelling serve?

Labelling political Islam, one of the main political movements in the country, as Islamic fundamentalism or as the threat of *Sharia* acutely has taken away any 'legitimacy' that these movements may have and put them under the spotlight. Labelling such an important political opposition confuses the people, creates unjustified suspicion and tension in the society.

At best it distracts people's attention from the real social economic and political issues. In other words the whole issue of the 'threat of Islamist fundamentalism' has hijacked real politics in Turkey. It has been artificially dominating the political agenda by pushing away fundamental problems such as the high inflation, high unemployment rate, increasing inequalities, deepened poverty, lack of provision of the basic services and elusive democratisation and like.

³¹⁴ See Munson, 1995, p.152; Eduardo J. Campo, 1995, p. 169.

It seems that labelling such movements as Islamic fundamentalist, communist, nationalist, separatist or extremist makes it easier for the authorities to deal with them. Labelling strips them of their socioeconomic or political bases and reduces them to almost a security matter, and its followers to suspects, criminals or convicts. Usually, by demonising a movement the authorities acquire legitimacy to use force against them. The Islamic fundamentalism threat of the 1990s mirrors the 1970s preoccupation with the Communist threat when the left was perceived as the major threat to the country's security and leftist groups demeaned. Ironically, at that time the Islamists played the same card, attacking the left as a red menace without realising that one day they would be seen as the green peril.

Despite the fact that there is a general disagreement about the categorisation of political Islam as fundamentalism it has often been regarded as a major threat to the West and stability in the Middle East (Esposito, 1995, p. 4). Also there are writers mainly in the West who have equated political Islam with "terrorism", "extremism", "irrationalism", "intolerance" and so forth.³¹⁵ The long-term consequences of this uncritical acceptance of the term fundamentalism by western intellectuals has caused an unjustified, harsh treatment of anything to do with Islam whether political, social, cultural or religious in the West as well as in Muslim countries. Frank Furedi has argued that in the long-term there would be more and more authoritarian measures being introduced to deal with this new plague of Islam, as the West sees it, and this will have repercussions both in the West and outside. It is very likely that Western governments will demand Muslim governments keep a close eye on the 'imaginary Muslim enemy' and make sure it is kept at bay (Furedi, 1996, p. 13). It seems that there has been a stigma attached to Islam and it has led to complications in the West and outside. There is no doubt that there are Islamist groups and movements involved in radical, extremist politics, terrorist activities- like al-Qaida or Hizbullah and other extremist Islamist groups in Turkey and elsewhere-exhibiting irrational attitudes and intolerant behaviour e.g. the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, however, it must be questioned whether or not those separate groups and activities justify such generalisations about all movements with an Islamic tone.

³¹⁵ See Huntington, 1995, pp. 22-49; Lewis, 1990, pp. 47-60; Miller, 1993, pp. 43-56.

For some like Esposito (1995) and Furedi (1996, p. 12) they are, often, neither a threat to western civilisation, nor extremist, or they are intolerant zealots who are reacting to their own governments that are often antidemocratic, corrupt and incompetent. For others like Roy (1994) these movements can be seen as Third World Movements rising against foreign domination in their countries. There is little doubt that these movements are a symptom of the modern world. Contrary to common wisdom the militants are rarely mullahs; they are young products of the modern educational system, and university educated. They are often raised in recently migrated families or impoverished middle classes from the fringes of the big cities. Islamist intellectuals gave a new dimension to Islam. It is now an ideology as well as a religion. The Islamist intellectuals were influenced heavily by the militant Marxists in the universities and often borrowed concepts from them. They do not seek to return to what existed before but want to reappropriate society and modern technology based on politics (Roy, p. 3).

It can be suggested that there is not one Islam but several Islams. In a general sense the Muslim world is divided into three geographic and cultural spheres: the Sunni Arab Middle East, the Sunni Indian subcontinent, and Irano-Arab Shiism. Turkey is totally different from the Arab world and has its own organisations. These groups are different from each other geographically and politically. Therefore it is not plausible to talk about an Islamic union (Roy, 1994, p. 2). The great diversity of Islamic parties and movements is another factor that dismisses the myth of a unified Islamic fundamentalism. As Karabell (1996, pp 78-79) argued, from Hamas Palestine; Hizballah in Lebanon; the Refah (Welfare) party in Turkey; the armed Islamic Group (GIA) in Algeria; the Jemaat-i - Islam in Pakistan all of these Islamic groups are very different in many dimensions from each other. Therefore it is not realistic to conjecture about a unified, universal, aggressive Islamist fundamentalist threat neither to the West nor in those Muslim countries where political Islam is visible.

The above discussion shows that despite the widespread suspicion, anxiety, and the perception of an exaggerated Islamic fundamentalist threat such groups are not in a position to pose much danger to the West and its institutions. Nor necessarily should their rise be interpreted in that way. In general they are developing as a reaction to their own governments out of long-term dissatisfaction, corruption and the

inadequacy of government policies in preventing poverty, unemployment and to raise the living standards as well as against foreign domination.

Esposito (1995, p.5) argued that unfortunately, American policymakers have too often proven to be myopic, seeing the Muslim world and Islamic movements as a monolith and viewing them only in terms of extremism and terrorism. For him (1995, p. 77) 'the term "Muslim fundamentalist" has become a convenient but misleading way for the Western media and Western governments to identify wide-ranging Islamist groups in Muslim countries as well as a ready "bogey" for Muslim regimes wishing to degrade and demean their opposition'. The same observation is true in the case of the Turkish policymakers, the elite, and the media who view political Islam as nothing but religious fundamentalism seeing it solely in terms of religious extremism or as a threat to modernity, secularism and democracy.

It can be argued that the fundamentalism categorisation in this case appears to be misplaced. Although the rise of the WP/VP has overwhelmingly been viewed as the rise of Islamic fundamentalism, neither the WP/VP's leading cadres or the majority of its voters seems to be religious extremists or fundamentalists. Contrary to the many Islamic movements in the Muslim world the leaders of the Turkish Islamic parties Erbakan and his close associates are not clergymen but have professional or business backgrounds. (Heper, 1997, p.35). Erbakan is not an Islamic thinker; he is a professor of engineering graduated from a German university. Furthermore, in contrast to some other Islamic movements the tradition of NOP-NSP-WP/VP has not been able to produce original Islamic thinkers like Jamal al Din al -Afghani, Mawdudi, Qutb, Ali Shariati, or Ayatollah Khomeini.³¹⁶

N.Göle (1997, p.53) developed an explanation for the Turkish Islamic movements by suggesting "Islamic movements are not solely a reaction to a given situation of class and cultural domination, but also present a counter-cultural model of modernity, and a new paradigm for self-definition that has led to the formation of Islamic counter-elites". (1997, p. 53). For Göle "Islamism, both in its ideological formations and sociological practices, has created new hybridizations between tradition and

³¹⁶ Çakır, 1994, pp. 126-127.

modernity, religion and secularism, community and religion.” (ibid: 54). She argued that these new agents of change represented the move of Islam from the periphery of the system to its centre, and yet were themselves a product of that centre, of its educational institutions and its urban life.” (Ibid: 54). What this hybridisation process tells us is that the identification of the leaders of the WP/VP (Erbakan and his associates) as Islamist fundamentalists is not an accurate one. They are not truly modernist elites either. That is why they would easily be charged with having an ambivalent attitude toward important issues: Islamist ideology, democracy, secularism etc. For instance the Islamists’ attitude toward democracy has been one of the hottest discussed topic.

It has been observed, by several authors, that the WP’s views toward democracy have been ambivalent.³¹⁷ The WP called the present Turkish system a “fraud”, a “guided democracy”, and a “dark-room regime” and announced the WP’s intention for a “real democracy” (Özbudun, 2000, p. 87). So far, the intention of a “real democracy” remains elusive therefore one cannot decide on this issue. However, in the past the WP/VP has failed to show a strong democratic instinct.³¹⁸ But then the credentials of the Turkish democracy in general and other parties’ democratic instincts have not been well developed either.

In terms of party activists even though they seem to be more radical than ordinary WP/VP voters, the difference seems slight.³¹⁹ The ideological attitudes of the local or ‘middle elites’ as they have been called by some students of politics, or as I have preferred to call them throughout this thesis, the grassroots activists, have been important to bring into account. It was noted, in Chapter 5, that compared to the WP/VP’s voters grassroots activists seem to be a little bit more religiously (40 %) and ideologically (21 %) motivated than the voters. Some 40 per cent of them were motivated by religious reasons, while 21 per cent of them joined the party for ideological reasons. In their outlook although they want Islam to be given some sort of say/place in everyday life in the public sphere the majority of them wanted separation of state and religion. Very few opposed the idea of secularism altogether.

³¹⁷ See Özbudun, 2000, p. 87; Çakır, 1994, pp. 127-130; Heper, 1997, p. 35.

³¹⁸ See Çakır, 1994, p. 129; Özbudun, 2000, pp. 87-88).

³¹⁹ This point has been discussed extensively in Chapter, 5.

Equally, however, the overwhelming majority of them wanted a Western style, Anglo-Saxon model rather than the French model of secularisation.

It has been argued that behind its radical rhetoric, the WP often shows signs of pragmatism and flexibility.³²⁰ This pragmatism and flexibility is reflected in its electoral bases as well. The general characteristics of a political party cannot be separated from its social bases. In terms of 'political Islam and support for the WP a recent survey showed that the WP combines religious and class appeals. A survey in December 1996 revealed that 60.6 % of WP voters favoured including some Islamic principles in the constitution. However, when the voters were asked why they voted for the WP only half gave ideological reasons, like the WP's defence of religious values (20.9 %), its promise of a "just order" (13.4 %), and its respect for "national and moral values" (12.5 %). Some 29.6 percent of them voted for the WP because they believed it were an honest and reliable party. What these findings show is that there is a strong religious appeal and between one-third and one-half of the WP's voters have been voting for non-ideological reasons' (Özbudun, pp. 89-90). The fact that half of the WP voters vote for the WP not for ideological/religious reasons is a very important indicator that the WP/VP cannot be defined solely in religious terms. Other surveys indicate far less religiously motivated voting among the WP's voters. For example, according to a 1994 survey only one-third of the WP's voters voted for the party because it was an Islamic party (Heper, 1997, p. 35). What is common in those survey findings is that the WP/VP's social and electoral supporters are far from being religious extremists or radicals.

Why then did the 1994 and 1995 election results cause such a reaction among the Turkish elites? And why has the WP/VP continued to be seen as an Islamic fundamentalist party rather than a pragmatist mass party? How can this overstated reaction of the Turkish elites that led to the 28 February process be justified? It seems this situation can be explained in terms of two different but related dimensions.

The first dimension is the mystified notion of secularisation that has been embedded deep into the public consciousness; the political and popular culture while the second

³²⁰ Özbudun, 2000, p. 89.

is the very special and central role of secularisation in Turkish politics since the early 1920s. Both dimensions are extremely important to define how Turkish elites make sense of the threat of fundamentalism.

The perception of political Islam's ascendancy as a threat to secularism, modernity and democracy is closely associated with how the concept of secularism was defined in the first place. The definition and implementation of secularisation was an ambivalent process profoundly underscored in the popular culture and official ideology. This ill-defined concept of secularism has led in time to some mystification. The application of this concept into politics has proved problematic as can be seen in Turkish politics throughout the 1990s.

Turkey's current political crisis has shown how a social myth could continue to distract from the development of a healthy, stable democracy. The latest confrontation between the secularists and Islamists began with the 1994 local elections. In these elections the Welfare Party gained an unprecedented result by winning the majority of the municipalities including Istanbul and Ankara. This trend continued in the general election of the 24th December 1995. The pro Islamist WP emerged from these elections as the largest group in the parliament achieving 158 seats out of 550.

In many ways the process of 28 February sets the best example for the mystification of a concept and its long-term consequences upon political life. First of all, it has created an illusion among the influential military and bureaucratic elites, intelligentsia, and the secularised and modernised strata, of a 'purely and completely secularised' society, which never existed. Once political Islam, i.e. the WP/VP, became visible in politics that illusion seemed shattered. It appeared this purely secularised modern society came under attack from the rise of political Islam.

As the rural masses moved, a consequence of the restructuring policies, to the cities in their hundreds of thousands every year seizing the opportunity for political participation with the WP, the dogma of secularism was challenged by politically emancipated masses. However moderate this challenge there has been a very serious counter attack to destroy its social and political foundations. Immediately after the

elections in 1995 the country was shaken by the growing electoral support for the pro-Islamist WP. The principle of secularisation a modern taboo was seen to be threatened. The headlines read: “ Shariat is coming”; “*seriat tehtidi*” (threat of Islamic fundamentalism); “ religious threat against the contemporary, modern *and laik* (secular) republic”, “ fundamentalism is the enemy of democracy and contemporary civilisation” and so on.

Needless to say there have been very few issues in Turkish history that have united political and social organisations of all different political persuasions all parties of the centre-left and centre-right, various civil society organisations, military, trade unions, major universities, various pressure groups, women organisations, political commentators and columnists, all rallied around the issue of fighting the threat of Islamist extremism.

The military, which views itself as the ultimate guarantor of the secular establishment, has stepped in to press the Islamist-led government to step down. The threat of Islamic fundamentalism reached a point where for the first time the military changed its security concept- the perception of risk- and put the internal threat before the external one. According to the daily *Milliyet* the military has changed its Concept of Defence by saying “ We must be very careful the internal threat is now ahead of the external one.”³²¹ This was an historical turning point and the internal threat was, of course, the rise of political Islam (*şeriat*) namely the Welfare Party.

After openly charging the WP as the biggest threat to the secular republic, the military via the National Security Council (NSC), increased its pressure to a point intolerable to the Islamist led government which soon decided to step down. However, the tension between the pro-Islamist WP and secularist elites did not stop there. Erbakan the leader of the WP was not just about to lose the government but his party too. The largest party in the Turkish parliament was closed down by the Supreme Court for its actions against the principles of the secular republic.³²²

³²¹ See *Milliyet*, 30 th April 1997.

³²² Chris Morris, *The Guardian*, 16 January, 1998.

Although the Islamist party was not a newcomer to Turkish politics, the election successes of Refah triggered a flood of suspicion and paranoia among Turkey's secularist elites. Refah's narrow success with 21.3 percent of the vote created shock waves not just at home but abroad too. (Sayarı, 1996, p. 35). The phobia of Islamic fundamentalism (*Irtica fobisi*) was set to dominate the daily reports. Some urged an immediate action against the *seriatci yukselis* (the rise of fundamentalism) while others urged the military to intervene to restore the principles of the secular republic. It can be claimed that all this anxiety confirms a deep confusion over the concept of secularisation used for so long without a proper understanding of it. Furthermore, it indicates a deep-rooted Islam phobia, among certain groups, fed by the media throughout the 1990s.

It is argued that there have been four phobias that shaped official ideology throughout the Republican political history, namely, Islamism, Kurdish identity, leftist ideology and liberalism. They also constitute the biggest obstacle to the development of civil society (Göle, 1996, p. 20). Two of these ideologies: Islamism and Kurdish identity challenged the new regime in the first years of the Republic so the modernist secular elite has legitimate grounds for this fear. But, it can be argued that the response to the Islamist challenge was disproportionate. This suspicion about religion's position and potential in the political sphere meant that the process of secularisation automatically became an ideological issue and an instrument in the hands of modernist secularist elites. This point brings us to our second dimension the very special role of secularisation.

8.1.2 A Very Politicised Notion of Secularism

The second dimension is the overly politicised term of secularisation. It seems that very few commentators questioned the basic assumption of whether political Islam constitutes an immediate threat to the secular order or not the majority believed it. However, there are writers like Y. Demirer (1998) N. Göle (2000) and E. Özdalga (1997) who question whether this widespread fear of *Irtica* (Islamist fundamentalism) was well founded or not. For instance, E. Özdalga (1997, P.21) asks: "Does the fact that this political movement scored little more than one fifth of the votes in the last

elections (December 1995) constitute a threat to the very foundation of the secular republic?" The answer to this question she suggests is very much related to how the concept of secularism is defined. It is evident that it is the very definition of the concept of secularisation that really creates the problem. And brings the country to a standstill creating a political crisis that felled the elected Islamist government. It didn't stop there the parliament; political parties and elites lost their credibility.

Özdalga (1997, p. 23) argued that the propaganda put forward by those groups seeking to curb the growing influence of Islamic groups, which claim the secular nature of the Turkish regime is being threatened, is untrue. Hence the characterisation of the present situation is based on false consciousness in the Marxist sense. She adds:

A secular and relatively stable regime has been presented as if it were on the verge of collapse, due to, a heavy onslaught by radical Islamists. The actual state of things is hidden in order to legitimate the power ambitions of the Old Kemalist Guard, based as it is on an unholy alliance between the military, the leftists and such groups on the right that are too weak to make a successful political performance of their own. The effect of their scare mongering propaganda is disastrous. It sows mistrust and suspicion between different groups in society, and, operating like a self-fulfilling prophecy, impedes even further the chance for sound development of democratic practices. (Ibid: 23).

One can agree with the first half of Özdalga's assessment about the stability and strength of the secular regime in Turkey and it is true that it was presented as if it were about to collapse due to the rise of the WP. It is also correct that such presentation or scare mongering has created mistrust, suspicion and social tension. However one cannot agree with the assumption that it has been played out in this way because of the power ambitions of the military and bureaucratic elite with the leftists. What I would argue instead is that more than their power ambitions it is the notion of mystified secularisation causing such reaction from the military and bureaucratic elite and other modernised secularised sections in society that led Turkey to the 28 February process.

Undoubtedly this kind of intervention in politics was a serious blow to the country's fragile democracy. It seems that democratic stability and civil initiative has once more gone down the drain. Since the 1995 general elections four consecutive governments have come into office and have lasted on average one year. The political

crisis is so deep that the process of 28 February (1997) has not been reversed. Turkish politics is still in turmoil and the early general election of 18 April 1999 produced more fragmentation and volatility. The biggest losers since this crisis began are democracy and the people of Turkey. It has come to a point where millions of people are forced to choose either the military coup or religious fundamentalism as if they were the only alternatives. The only real alternative to this political confrontation should have been democracy itself.

It seems the paradox of putting secularisation before democracy continues to create social tension. Göle (1996, p.19) argued that the modernist elite has always feared that if religious values were allowed to be represented freely in the public sphere it may some day become too influential in politics and threaten the principle of secularism. To prevent this happening the principle of secularism was upheld while the democratic representation was restricted. Thus state authoritarianism, “enlightened despotism”, or single-party regimes often become the only choice for secular westernised elites. Her generalisation seems to reflect the relationship between the principle of secularism and democracy in Turkey until the 1950s. From then on single party rule ended and the country adopted a multi-party regime with parliamentary democracy but still the principle of secularism has priority over democracy.

The (1995) election results showed that the WP was the largest party yet it only received less than one quarter of the votes. This means that the majority of the electorate does not support the WP’s politics. The majority of its voters had does not vote for the WP/VP for Islamic reasons.³²³ Also, the pro-Islamic parties have been part of the Turkish polity for the last three decades and so far there has been no compelling evidence that the radicals are the stronger faction of this movement. Individuals like Şevki Yılmaz who are the strongest proponents of Sharia laws appear to remain marginal or have been expelled for various reasons while the majority of Islamists are in favour of the present constitutional order.³²⁴ How, then, do we make sense of the expression of religion and religious values in the public arena? One could

³²³ See for reasons of voting for the WP/VP the survey results Chapter, 5.

³²⁴ Özdalga, 1997, p. 22. Also my own observations from the field confirms Özdalga’s claims, that the majority of voters and 40 percent of political activists voted or joined the WP/VP with other reasons rather than the religious or ideological incentives. See Chapter, 5.

see it as part and parcel of the expansion of the civil society, rather than a reason for interrupting the democratic process.

In chapter three I demonstrated the emergence and transformation of political Islam in Turkey. It was observed that its emergence was closely connected to the clash of interest between the Anatolian petit bourgeoisie and big business in Istanbul and since then it has been evolving constantly. It has evolved from a small cadre party with a rigid, religious conservative outlook in the 1970s to a mass political party of the 1990s. To avoid repetition it can be said that all major policies and membership criteria have changed beyond recognition. Today's VP is a modern mass party with a modern organisational structure, party policies and campaign methods.

So if it isn't religious reasons or fundamentalism, what is the driving force behind the rise of political Islam in Turkey? What the above analysis indicates is that the rise of the WP can be understood not necessarily as the rise of Islamic fundamentalism but as the estrangement of significant sections of Turkish society from the mainstream political parties. It was argued in chapter 2 that throughout the 1990s parties faced a real problem of the erosion of public confidence in them. According to a survey political parties are the least trusted institutions in Turkey.³²⁵

Can we exclude the possibility that religious reasons are behind the rise of the welfare party as well as more practical socioeconomic reasons? The answer is 'yes' and 'no'. It is 'yes' in the sense that the WP more or less preserved its core or ideological voter support almost intact since the 1970s. For example, throughout the 1970s WP's predecessor the National Salvation Party (NSP) had around 10 percent of the vote. The NSP had received 11.8 percent of the vote in its first election in 1973 and, 8.1 percent in the 1977 general elections. Although it received 4,000 more vote (1.269.918) in 1977 elections compare to the 1973, due to increased rate of voter participation, its share dropped to 8.1 percent (Çakir, R 1994, pp.216-217). After the military coup of 1980 the WP had a slow start but in 1987 general elections its share increased (7.16 percent) near to its core/ideological voter support. The period from 1973 to 1987 shows that traditionally the NSP/WP/VP have around 10 percent of

³²⁵ See Strateji MORI 1998, p. 35 (cited in TESEV (2000, p. 16).

hard-core supporter. However from the early 1990s it has changed. The WP changed its main policies such as “just economic order”, changed its organizational structure, strategy and tactics, and adopted new rhetoric therefore managed to combine religious and class appeals.³²⁶ Thus, the WP/VP expanded its electoral support considerably among the newly migrated urban poor in the big cities.

From the 1991 general elections the WP’s support bases changed. The studies indicates that the increase in the WP’s votes has not been due to the rise of religious fundamentalism, or religious sentimentalism. How do we know this is simply by asking the voters about their incentives to vote for the WP/VP. The studies found out that between one-third and one-half of the WP/VP’s voters voted for the party because of their religious or ideological reason but other half voted other than religious or ideological reasons (See Özbudun, 2000, pp.90-91) When this figure compared with the WP/VP’s share of vote which was 21.4 percent (in 1995) and 15.5 percent (in 1999) it shows that there has not been much change in its traditional, hard core religious/ideological support, but this is not true for the other half of its electoral support. They are not supporting the WP/VP for religious or ideological reason but for “just economic order”, for it’s clean image for its protection of poor and like.

In the main time it can be argued that the rising tide of religious revivalism has been playing some role in the rise of the WP/VP in Turkey as well. As argued in chapter one religious movements have been on the rise all around the world. Although the Islamic revivalism has been most extensively discussed and attracted enormous media attention, all forms of religious revivalism has been rising across the glob. From Hindu fundamentalism in India to Jewish fundamentalism in Israel, Christian fundamentalism in the US to Islamic fundamentalism in Muslim world, religious fundamentalism thriving in all faiths. It has been acknowledge by the several scholars that since the 1970s especially after the Iranian revolution in 1979 Islam re-emerged as a potent global force. (Esposito, 1995, p. 11).

Although it is logical to argue that the rise of religious revivalism in across the Muslim world must have contributed at a certain extent to the rise of the WP/VP

³²⁶ Ozbudun, E 2000, p.87.

during the 1990s in Turkey, there isn't much empirical evidence of it. What seems instead has happened is that the WP/VP retained its traditional strong 10 percent of religious/ ideological support and added another 10 percent from non-religious/ideological voters. Nevertheless we cannot rule out the impact of this rising tide of religious revivalism on the rise of the WP/VP all together. It might have helped in other ways such as by helping to the WP to retain its core support of 10 percent. It is plausible to argue that if the religious revivalism had not been rising steadily as it has been doing since the 1970s the WP/VP might have lost some of its religious/ideological support since than.

8.2 Islamic Fundamentalism Demystified

8. 2.1 The Role of Party Organisations

At the beginning of this research it was hypothesised that the rise of political Islam could not be described simply as religious revivalism or Islamic fundamentalism, but rather, there have been other 'worldly reasons'-social problems- responsible for its popularity. If not Islamist fundamentalism then what does the WP/VP owe its electoral success to? The success of political Islam has resulted from a combination of various factors none of which, apart from the grassroots activism, individually dominates the others. It is a combination of various factors in which the local party organisations and grassroots activists play the role of a catalyst to activate the process. And if the mixture was lacking one of its several elements it might not produce the same result.

In this section I intend to demonstrate that the rise of the WP/VP throughout the 1990s was not the rise of fundamentalism as such but was something the pro-Islamic WP/VP achieved through hard working, highly committed, resourceful grassroots organisations. Maybe it is time now to briefly reiterate these factors that made this winning formula. In this context, maybe the most important factor has been the decline of the political party system that caused a significant process of estrangement of large sections of voters away from the mainstream political parties.

It has been argued that from the 1980s onwards the Turkish political party system has experienced high levels of party fragmentation, electoral volatility and ideological polarization. Individual parties have suffered a decline in organisational capacity, party identification and public support from the citizens.³²⁷ Turkish politics has endured a long-term impasse and the state of the Turkish political parties has been responsible for this situation.

Especially from the late 1980s onwards more and more people become disillusioned with their political parties and started to look elsewhere for a better alternative.

Fragmentation and volatility is much higher in Turkey compared to developed countries. It was estimated that between 1954 and 1999 the average volatility was 21 percent from one election to the next (TESEV, 2000, p.12). There have been several sociological reasons for this ongoing political alienation of the masses from mainstream Turkish parties.

It has been noticed that contemporary Turkish politics has been shaken by a series of disturbing factors that redefined the spectrum of the traditional party system as well as party loyalties and values (Kalaycıoğlu, 1998, p. 1). The first major event was the military coup of 12 September 1980 that effectively banned all political activities. All parties were closed down and all leaders and cadres in the higher echelons of the parties were interrogated and imprisoned for several months or years in some cases. It meant a total breakdown in politics and nothing was going to be same ever again.

Following the coup the military elites wanted to reshape the Turkish polity by introducing new electoral laws and political agents –political parties- and vetoing some of the old elements. The aim of this plan was to discredit the multiparty politics of the 1970s and return to the two party systems of 1950s. Military elite thought that the multiparty polity was causing the political disarray and that two party systems would prevent high fragmentation and volatility. For this reason all pre 1980 parties or their successors were banned or vetoed by the military government. Toward the 1983 elections two parties the People's Party (PP) and the Nationalist Democracy

³²⁷ See Özbudun, 2000, p. 73.

Party (NDP) were prepared to take part in the first elections of 1983 but a third party the Motherland was involuntarily allowed to take part in elections as well.

However, the military elite's ambitious plan for two party system politics did not work out very well. In fact, effectively it was over with the return of the pre 1980 political leaders like Demirel, Ecevit, Erbakan and Turkes, into politics in 1987. The Turkish party system became much more fragmented and the restrictions led to a process of 'party duplication' on the centre-left and centre-right. The duplication of the centre parties has been one of the most significant factors in the high level of fragmentation.

Increased electoral volatility and organisational decline have played an important role in the process of declining party attachment and identification among the electorate. The military's intervention and subsequent restrictions were partially responsible for the institutional decline of the Turkish party system. Along with the frequent closure of political parties this meant none of the parties enjoyed the support of more than two generations. So there have always been interruptions and breakdowns creating a cycle of discontinuity in the social and electoral bases, organisational structure, membership, party identity, policies and party ideology. In a sense they have to start from scratch whenever there is an intervention from outside politics. However, these interventions are not the only cause of the decline of the Turkish party system.

The organisational structure and characteristics of the mainstream political parties are an important factor. It has been pointed out that with the exception of the WP Turkish political parties have been 'described as cadre or catchall parties with strong clientelistic features'. Many of them developed features of the cartel parties with strong sultan like authoritarian leaderships.³²⁸ A common characteristic of the cadre, catchall or cartel parties is the diminished role and status of the party membership from within the party. The second is the reduced role of the local party organisations in the election campaigns. The exclusion of membership and local party organisations appears to be standard in most centre right and centre left parties in the post 1983 period. When this current state of parties is combined with Turkey's long-term

³²⁸ Özbudun, E 2000.

ongoing multiple socioeconomic problems it prepares a perfect recipe for more party fragmentation, electoral volatility, party organisational decline, and lessened party identification and loyalty among the voters.

Over the last fifteen years, excepting the WP/VP all Turkish parties suffered a decline in their party organisations and a weakening of party identification. The demise of party identification has been a problem in developed countries and new democracies as well (see Corry, 1973; Özbudun, 2000, p. 79 and TESEV 2000). Nonetheless, the Turkish case has been significantly different in many ways. It has been distinct because electoral volatility has been very high. More than one in five of the electorate has been voting for a different party from one election to the next. For this reason a different party came to the top in each of the last four elections. In the search for a better alternative the electorate has swung from one party to another, but the situation has been deteriorating. A recent survey shows that on the whole no party seems to be appealing to more than 10 percent of voters in the country (See Chapter 2).

The organisational decline is rooted in the characteristics of the Turkish political parties. Apart from the WP/VP they are not mass membership parties but mostly cadre or catchall parties with common clientilistic characteristics. Therefore the major Turkish parties of the centre-left and centre-right have not developed widespread party organisations throughout the country. Instead of cultivating well-organised horizontal party networks their organisational network is based on vertical, clientilistic ties.

Party directed patronage was the main characteristic of pre 1980 parties and despite the breakdown in 1980 it has not changed. Even the new parties of the post 1983 period like the MP, which governed the country for two terms, did not want to develop modern, effective, vibrant and horizontally organised party organisations. Instead it did choose to use pork-barrel patronage to sustain its electoral support.

The organizational weakening of parties and party identification ties has been closely connected to the disillusionment of millions with political parties. This process was due to the country's long-term economic problems -high inflation, a huge foreign and

domestic public debt, growing inequalities, increased unemployment, high budget deficits, and cutbacks in social policies.

In addition to that, widespread political corruption involving many party leaders has caused disappointment and anger among the citizens.³²⁹ In many ways the economic problems of the late 1970s have been worsened by the neoliberal restructuring policies of the 1980s and 1990s. What was intended to be a solution led to far more serious problems. The high rate of inflation, unemployment, social inequalities and poverty have been far more prevalent since the 1980s when the IMF backed neoliberal restructuring programs started to be implemented.³³⁰

The fact is that since 1983 all of the political parties on the centre-right and centre-left have been tried more than once and none of them achieved the smallest success in alleviating any of the country's burning problems. Their clientilistic structure makes them much more vulnerable to losing party attachments and party identification among their followers. .

It has been observed that there is exception among the Turkish political parties that despite this downward trend the WP increased its share of vote and became the largest party in the parliament and came to power following the general election in 1995. The Welfare party has escaped this trend of increasing fragmentation, electoral volatility, party realignment, and declining party identification and party loyalty; the declining role of local party organisations etc., achieving quite the opposite. The WP/VP emerged as the main beneficiary of this process.

Answering the following question will help understand another part of the mystery that surrounds the unprecedented rise of political Islam in Turkey: How did the WP/VP buck the trend of party decline in Turkey, and become the largest party while the other political parties were disintegrating and losing their electoral support? The answer must be the WP/VP's organisational strength and efficient, highly committed and informed grassroots activism.

³²⁹ See Özbudun, E (2000: 79)

³³⁰ For a detailed account of the neoliberal economy policies and its long-term consequences in Turkey see Chapter 4.

Despite the general trend moving away from party centred politics to candidate centred politics the party organisations proved to be significantly influential in contributing to the party's electoral successes. If the party organisation is the first condition for a successful election campaign the second condition must be grassroots activism.³³¹

Political parties have been one of the most distinctive, successful forms of political organisations. They are the bridge between society and governmental power and a key component of the representative democracy. As they are the means of acquiring or influencing governmental power they need sufficient public support behind them. To achieve these parties need to mobilise voters through party organisations and party activists. Although there are various ways of election campaigning for mobilising social support and canvassing votes, my findings show that the local party organisations and grassroots activists have proven to be very influential on the election results. From its foundation to its closure, the WP developed nationwide membership organisations and thanks to its mass grassroots activism won unprecedented election victories.

8.2.2 The Foundation Stones: Role of Grassroots Activists

One of my main objectives was to find out whether grassroots activists and party organisations had any effect on the increase of the WP/VP's share of votes during the 1990s or not. As argued above, despite the current trend political parties still need members for the traditional electioneering functions of canvassing and leafleting voters and persuading supporters to go out and vote. Grassroots activists are elected representatives of the party and carry out electioneering. More than that they are often the key opinion-formers in the neighbourhood. They provide a voice in the community and help to set the political agenda, legitimising certain opinions in comparison with others.³³²

³³¹ Although there are writers who doubted the benefits of grassroots activities on the parties' electoral fortunes, there is compelling evidence from case studies that done in different countries suggested that party organisations and grassroots activism is very influential on the parties' electoral fortunes. For both views see chapter 7.

³³² See Seyd and Whiteley, 1992, pp. 219-220.

One of the major findings of my study is that the effect of the local party organisations on election results has been highly significant. It has been observed that becoming mass membership party organisations can prevent the major problems suffered by contemporary political parties. As the WP/VP has shown with its mass party characteristic, strong local branches and committed, active party members it is possible to distinctively buck the trend of party decline severely undermining all other mainstream parties in Turkey.

Presently except for the WP/VP none of the parties have active membership organisations or membership activities. A survey in 1996 showed that 12.1 percent of the voters are party members, but membership in Turkey as Özbudun (2000, p. 80) argued is often little more than being a party supporter. In contrast to the rest of the Turkish parties the WP/VP has the largest grassroots organisations. Especially after the 1994 local elections the WP launched a massive recruitment campaign and it reached 4.5 millions members before its closure in 1998.³³³

It has been observed that in these parties the role of party membership and grassroots organisations has been reduced significantly. Thanks to technological and social innovations, developments in the communication technology – TV and computers, and emergence of certain expertise in social sciences like PR experts, pollster, campaign managers and professional fund raisers the party leadership can launch election campaigning without the support of large numbers of party activists. But the role of party membership is not limited to the election campaign only. The grassroots organisations and party activists have got many other important functions essential for political parties and electoral process.³³⁴ The empirical analysis from Turkey shows that the WP/VP's grassroots activists value their activities as essential for their party's electoral success.

Grassroots activists act as a mediator between the neighbourhood-the constituency- and the *ilçe* -sub-districts-. As an organisation they carry the opinions, demands and the expectations of the local people-, as influential agents of the party on the ground

³³³ See Çakır, 1994, pp. 51-52.

³³⁴ The functions of the party membership discussed in Chapter, 5 and 6.

grassroots activities are very influential. They are opinion leaders influencing and forming opinion in their localities and are the pillar of the party holding it together in especially difficult, turbulent times. As the arms and the muscles' of the party they carry out day-to-day party activities.

Chapters 5 and 6 have revealed some important aspects of the VP's grassroots activists. In chapter 5 I have looked at the patterns of participation. It appears that regional disparities and family played a significant role. The majority (76 %) of my informants came from less developed regions while 79 percent of them have at least one person who are also members/supporters of the VP. Around 40 percent have expressed religious and 21 percent ideological incentives as the most important factor for their membership. The remaining 38 percent joined the VP with non-religious or ideological reasons. Some 14 percent said it is the best party for the country, while 16 percent saw it as trust worthy, and the other 7 percent joined the VP as a reaction to other parties. In chapter 6 I have attempted to have a portrait of the VP's activists. The results are very interesting and important in many respects. I have discovered striking similarities between the VP's grassroots activists and activists elsewhere. Despite the fact that the WP/VP has been viewed as an Islamic fundamentalist party by many commentators, my findings illustrate its activists share a lot with political activists from around the world. They, as their counterparts in Western Europe and North America, have similar socio-economic and demographic backgrounds: they have better educational qualifications, doing better jobs and earning more money. They are in the same (40-50) age group (average is 43 years old) married with 3.07 children on average.

In chapter 7 I have examined the effects of grassroots activists on the VP's electoral successes. I analysed what the VP's activists are doing and how they do it. I have discovered that the most common (37 percent) type of party activism they undertake is charity work. They provide material and nonmaterial benefits: food, coal, clothing, bursaries for the needy in the neighbourhoods. It is observed that this kind of grassroots activism is the most effective way of canvassing. Because of their community work, they are viewed as people who genuinely care about the poor and therefore the community's problems. Also via this social work and caring image, the WP/VP has been elevated to a messiah-like position.

Besides charity work, the VP's grassroots activists meet people on an almost daily basis showing sympathy, friendship and appreciation. They share the worries and problems of the ordinary people, and are there sharing the joy and sorrow of their fellow neighbourhood dwellers. The VP has distinguished itself as a mass membership party from other parties by its organisational structure, its well organised nation-wide local party organisations, highly committed and ideologically orientated, highly resourceful, and militant-like grassroots activists.

It must be borne in mind that the VP has not totally neglected high tech, media-led nation-wide election campaigning methods either. Instead it has been employing both 'labour-intensive' and 'capital-intensive' campaigning methods, although the former is to a lesser extent.³³⁵ In other words the VP is not just concentrating on grassroots activism, door-to-door or face-to-face canvassing on its own. It carries out nation-wide, centrally organised election campaigns through the media, television, radio as well. The VP's election campaigns are planned, organised and monitored rigorously by a computerised Centre of Election Issues are set up in every district centre.

It appears that being the only mass membership party gave superiority to the WP/VP over other parties. While all other parties of the centre-right and centre-left lost touch with the people, and their electoral support, the WP/VP increased its public support by utilising its membership organisations, youth and ladies commissions.

So what makes the WP/VP so distinct? As it was illustrated in chapter 7 the VP's grassroots activists are more active compared to British or American party activists. They spend long hours in an ordinary month for canvassing and their party activities are not only geared towards the election campaigns but are a year round activity. They seem to be with the people on the ground talking to them, listening to their problems and grievances. The way that they contact people and the activities that they organise are unique in many ways. They behave like a social security organisation in the neighbourhoods, providing material and nonmaterial aid for the gecekondü (slum) poor. Maintaining close relationships, they regularly visit those households where

³³⁵ For definition of the term 'capital-intensive' party organisations see Mair, 1997, p. 11.

there is a social occasion a celebration or a death. They appear to be very active in many ways, living within the community as one of them, as well as organising charity works, political meetings spreading the party's message, but mostly forming opinion in the community.

8.2.3 Blending The Modern With The Traditional: Hybridisation Of The Party Activism

It seems there are very few areas where the mix of modern with traditional can generate such a positive, creative and effective outcome as the WP/VP's campaigning strategies have. To mix modern with traditional has always been seen as something confusing, impossible or as an obstacle for any kind of progress in any area of social life, but the WP/VP's strategy and tactics have proven rather the opposite. The ability of the WP/VP's cadres and grassroots activists to tap into the historical, traditional and religious networks and readily available relations, cultural and local customary codes, the local common knowledge, utilising the linguistic richness of Islam, Islamic knowledge and culture in the service of daily politics all of these rather clever creative combinations have provided a leading edge to the WP/VP in electoral competition. They have ingeniously combined traditional and local relationships and networks with the nationwide modern communication technologies, methods and strategies in their day-to-day party activities.

The WP/VP has employed both very sophisticated campaigning methods with traditional aspects of community work: On the one hand the VP's party organisations stage a fully fledged modern election campaign with the usage of various experts for public relations, opinion polling, media professionals, fund raisers and image experts. The VP makes extensive use of computers, opinion polling, using mass media techniques, TV, radio and numerous newspapers at local as well at national level. The VP combines all latest campaigning methods, techniques and strategies with the most traditional human relations. It utilises traditional culture religious rhetoric and traditional-religious networks existing for centuries very successfully in its daily political activities. In other words the WP/VP developed a style that melded modern

with traditional producing a hybrid campaigning method that has been very effective. It is also a unique style that is predominantly local without neglecting the national.

8.2.4 The Extraordinary Ability Of Islam To Tap In To The Popular Culture

In addition to the innovative nature of the WP/VP's leading cadres and grassroots activists in tapping into readily available local, traditional and religious networks and, utilising them into daily politics, the religion of Islam is also highly adaptable to tap into popular culture and has become a political ideology *to mobilise the masses* in many Muslim countries.

In Islam, religion and politics are not separate spheres, as some writers may think. Although there are traces of such separation between the religious authority and the ruler: the king, this separation has been very thin in many cases and none-exists in some others. As Lewis (1988, p. 2) argued in classical Islam there was no distinction between Church and state. Throughout the history of Christendom, he argued, there have been two powers: God and Caesar representing the church and state in this world, but in Islam there is no such separation.

From its birth to the present century, Islam has occupied an important place in the ideology of the state and in Muslim politics. Therefore, the present revival of Islam in Muslim politics should not be all that unexpected (Esposito, 1983, p. 3).

“The Islamic state is a community of believers. Allah is the ultimate sovereign of the state and, indeed, of all creation. Political and religious leadership was vested in Muhammad, God's messenger on earth, who served as both Prophet and political leader of the Islamic community/state.” (Ibid: 4).

After Muhammad's death, this political and religious leadership persisted under the caliphate. But, within time, especially during the Ottoman Empire, a duality of religious and political leadership emerged. However this duality never was meant to be a withdrawal of Islam from politics or any other aspects of the socio-economic or cultural life.

From the mid-nineteenth century onwards due to Western influence and colonial rule, modernization had begun in some Muslim countries. In a general sense they followed a path of Westernisation and secularisation as they increasingly adopted Western models in politics, law, and education. Nevertheless, during the twentieth century, religion re-emerged in the politics of the Muslim world, inspiring anti-colonial, nationalist movements and their struggle for independence (Esposito, 1983, pp. 5-6).

Islamic movements have been on the rise throughout the Muslim world and the role of Islamic ideology has risen ever more so. In many cases, Islamic rhetoric provides a whole set of ideological objections to secular nationalism and Westernisation in Muslim countries like Turkey. As stated politics in Muslim countries are dominated by Islam and in some case such as Shi'ism in Iran the tradition of *struggle against oppression* is embedded into the very heart of religious ideology. As Juergensmeyer (1993, pp.50-51) suggests nowhere in Islam is struggle more a part of its tradition than in Shi'ite society. Struggle against oppression is part of Shiism.

It is a well-known fact that religion is one of the most successful predictor political preferences.³³⁶ Islam in particular presents a far ranging influence on politics. As several students of Islam pointed out "Islam" constitutes the language of politics in the Muslim world". (Eickelman and Piscatori, 1996, p.12). The language of Islam is much more than simply a vocabulary. It is made up of both symbols and mediators-those who modify and rework the symbols in specific circumstances and for particular purposes (ibid: 13).

It can be argued that the language of Islam is one of the most developed and effective means of communication packed with symbols and mediators that are universally recognisable across the Muslim world. In addition to its universally (in the Muslim world) recognised linguistic abilities, the religion of Islam is for many millions in the

³³⁶ See for example Jennings, K et al 1979: 463; Verba and Nie, 1972, pp. 97-101; Dalton, 1988, p. 148.

Muslim world a way of life, an ideology, and a belief that covers every aspect of life not just in this world but also beyond. This fact has been confirmed by my findings on the ground.³³⁷

As Esposito (1995,p.249) emphasised “political economy is essential in understanding the rise of Islamic movements. However, the force of political Islam cannot be simply reduced to the socio-economic failures of society.” ‘Not all but for many activists, “Islam is a motive force, a source of guidance for this life as well as the next”. It seems there are similarities between Esposito’s observations and my findings in Turkey. The majority (62 %) of the VP activists joined the party for religious (40 %) and ideological (21 %) reasons. The WP and its predecessor the VP have been described as the religiously oriented or pro-Islamist party and this fact, it seems, played a very significant role on the process of membership.³³⁸ Religion as the most eminent feature of culture also inspires political ideologies.³³⁹ It has acted as a source for various political ideologies. In this sense Turkey is not an exception.”(Turan, 1994, p.42).

It has been observed that the stronger the ideological conviction the more the individual spends effort for the party activities. A strong ideological incentive is very likely to lead an individual to take the initiative to join the party rather than passively waiting for a call from the party. “Ideological radicalism should motivate party members to become more involved than the voters or inactive members”. (Whiteley, 1995, p. 222).³⁴⁰ The empirical evidence also shows that the rate of political participation is positively influenced by the degree of political sophistication. (Klingemann, 1979, p. 281). It can be concluded that the high level of ideological sophistication and ideological conviction, which the VP’s activists possess, leads to a high level of political activism.

8.2.5 Not like any other Party: Distancing Itself Apart

³³⁷ For elaboration see Chapter 5.

³³⁸ See Kalaycıoğlu, E., 1998: 15.

³³⁹ For this see: C. V. Dijik and de Groot, A.H 1995;Çakır,R 1995;Çalışlar, O 1995;Lewis, B 1974;Daniel Price 1999,Chapter 2;Tapper, 1993 chapters 1-7;Yücekök, 1997.

³⁴⁰ Also see Ashford, 1972; Barnes and Kasse, 1979; Dowse and Hughes 1986; Marsh, 1990.

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s the WP had a rather clever, effective strategy of creating a clear line between itself and the rest of the political parties in Turkey. It was a very deliberate and conscious campaign to label any other parties as one, under the label of *taklitçiler* (imitators) of the West while portraying the WP as the genuine adherent of national and sacred values, and the true representative of the Turkish society.

In many ways the WP seemed to succeed in this issue of labelling, degrading others and distinguishing itself from the rest. One of the most significant reasons for this was the anti-system rhetoric of the WP until its fourth congress in 1994. Although it was not a totally anti-system party, it adopted an anti system rhetoric and opposed Kemalist ideology the principle of secularism and close relations with the West: the membership of the NATO and the EU.

In terms of economic policies too, the WP distinguished itself from the rest. As mentioned in chapter two there has been a policy convergence among the mainstream political parties. All become staunch proponents of global capitalism, restructuring policies, and the free market economy. The WP put forward a different social and economic policy called *adil düzen* (just order). As expected the promise of a just society and just economic order attracted considerable support from the lower classes, poorest sections of society and traditional centre-left voters as well. The process of convergence meant that the parties of the centre-right and the centre-left parties began to resemble each other. This convergence of policies immensely helped to the WP in distancing itself from other parties as well.

Distancing from the other parties occurred in many other areas. The issue of widespread political corruption that many of the other parties deeply involved with was one area from which the WP distanced itself. Throughout the 1990s corruption become a very common part of Turkish politics. When combined with the political clientilism the corruption, nepotism, bribery scandals melted away the public trust in the Turkish parties. As I pointed out in chapter 2, since 1983 all of the mainstream parties: the MP, TPP, SDPP and later the RPP that came to government where rocked by corruption scandals as well as by their incompetence in solving the country's acute problems. Since the mid 1980s the WP stressed better moral practices, opposing the erosion of religious and traditional moral values. With the support of its Islamist

rhetoric the WP/VP appeared to be holding the moral high ground and this helped to distance itself from the others.

As the WP/VP is the only mass political party, it has successfully survived the irresistible trend of party decline that effectively wiped out all centre-right and centre-left parties in Turkey. The VP have escaped from this process of party fragmentation, electoral volatility and organisational declining as well as declining party attachment and party identification among voters by developing nation-wide effective party organisations and attracting very well informed, highly committed, militant-like large party membership actively engaging with politics in their localities.

8.2.6 An Urban Based, ‘Anti-Neoliberal/Globalisation’ Movement, Under An Islamic Veil?

In Chapter 4, I examined the urban roots of the Islamic movements. I argued that contrary to the common perception that Islamic movements are part and parcel of the modernisation process influenced by the rapid phase of urbanisation. They emerged as a reaction against the failures of a modernising, secular state, perceived as corrupted and unable to solve socio-economic problems, and are often dictatorial. In addition these movements emerged as a reaction to the problems of over-urbanisation, unemployment and foreign domination in Muslim countries. (Halliday, 1995a, p. 48). It seems that Islamic movements have no problems whatsoever in adapting their ideology and organisational structures to contemporary conditions.

As observed the grassroots activists are educated in the modern schools, raised in recently urbanised families, and come from the impoverished middle class. The WP/VP elite adopted the traditional leftist policies, slogans, and campaign techniques. Also the majority of the WP/VP supporters are not "traditional" or "traditionalist" either. They by and large live with the values of modern city life, which has adopted the current trend of consumerism.

In Turkey the process of urbanisation started from the 1950s but this process accelerated with IMF designed restructuring programs since the 1980s. This process triggered a massive influx of immigration from rural to urban areas and this led to a rapid and uneven urbanisation in the last two decades. Since the 1970s, like Turkey, many other Muslim countries Algeria, Egypt, Iran, Pakistan, witnessed a rapid growth of urban population beyond the cities' capabilities to absorb them into the mainstream urban life. (Kepel, 1994, pp. 6-7). As table 6.1 illustrated the vast majority (76 %) of the VP's activists themselves had migrated to Ankara.

Not only has the rapid urbanisation facilitated more political participation but it has also deepened the dissatisfaction of the urban masses. As the millions pushed by the 'push factors' of the rural Anatolia into a few metropolitan cities, the *gecekondu* (slum) areas expanded enormously. It has been estimated that around ten million people live in *gecekondu* areas, in other words 35 per cent of the total urban population (Kongar, 2000, p.566). This ratio is even higher when the five largest cities are taken into account. In Ankara, for example, 58.4 per cent of population live in *gecekondus* (See Table 6.5). These new migrants faced unemployment and poverty; lack of housing insufficient basic services e.g. health and schooling shortages. Against this background the WP/VP developed peculiar socio-economic policies- e.g. the *Adil Düzen* (Just Order and Just Economic order) that voiced the concerns of the urban under classes, lower and lower middle classes, artisans, merchants and shopkeepers. Also through its nation-wide grassroots organisations the WP/VP runs charity work providing material and nonmaterial profits for the most needy in every neighbourhood.

As mentioned before the WP/VP have been successfully tapping into the existing traditional, religious and cultural resources. From the early days of its establishment the WP and after that the VP ingeniously made use of the traditional religious networks, relationships, traditional associations, groups and cultural resources as well as utilising traditional, deep rooted forms of solidarity organisations that have been around for centuries. It also creatively reconfigured the old, traditional political culture especially in relation to religious issues, social justice and equality, e.g. the

rhetoric of *Adil Düzen*³⁴¹ (Just Society), greater emphasis on Islamic brotherhood, and the like. The WP/VP, in its political campaigning, drew upon a certain type of language and phrasing that most people identify with, and it has been very affective in yielding results at the level of recruitment of new members and for electoral support.

The WP/VP voiced the demands for equality, justice, and democracy for the millions of urban poor whom have been badly affected by the globalisation process. The growing income disparity, unemployment and deepened poverty, long-term high inflation, sharp decline in the income of the millions of wage and salary earners, decline of the state welfare provisions, etc., have been the most defining characteristics of the last two decades in Turkey.

As observed, global capitalism has significantly eroded the functions and the borders of the nation states. As a result national -level governance has become ineffective.³⁴² This process has inescapably weakened the functions of the governments and political parties once they are in office. It has been observed that international corporations have been increasingly taking over the nation states' space by pushing them out of the economic and political sphere as well. Today many of them are more powerful than many of the nation states and forcing their will upon the governments, dictate policies like taxation, privatisation, flexible labour market that most suit their interests. There are international organisations like the IMF, the World Bank and WTO that also pressurise governments for similar reasons.

Since the 1980s neoliberal policies took over the World in the form of global capitalism and has created inequality, injustice, poverty and misery for millions, as well as dissent and dissatisfaction among them. As a result the majority of urban poor become hopeless and turn away from politics.

However my findings suggest a different story. As the neoliberal restructuring policies obliterated everything in their way the urban poor of the *geceköndü*

³⁴¹ The WP/VP as argued in chapter 2 and 3 is the only modern mass based political party and opposed the neoliberal economy policies. It has proposed a kind of social democratic economy policies called as *Adil Düzen* (Just Order). Also see Özbudun, 2000, p.88.

³⁴² See Hirst and Thompson, 1996, pp. 175-195; see also Hague, R at al 1998, pp.36-37.

(shantytowns) areas became increasingly politicised and raised their voice against this process. By voting, supporting the WP/VP or becoming a party activist, the urban poor actually made a strong statement in fighting opposition to global capitalism. The *gecekondu* (urban poor) communities display their dissatisfaction with the whole process and show their intentions for an alternative politics by throwing their own leaders in to political arena and uniting around the WP/VP that has been opposed to this process by offering a kind of ‘third way’³⁴³ economic model that called *Adil Düzen* (Just Order). Erbakan argued that just economic order (JEO) is a complete and fantastic order. He says that the JEO consists of the useful, functional aspects of capitalism and communism but the harmful sides of both has been left out (Quoted in Çakır, R 1994, p.133-34). According to Özbudun (2000, p.88) the WP’s *Adil Düzen* “just order” was an Islamic-inspired economic policy that it conceives as a third way. But it lacked a coherent theoretical bass and depicted party’s confusion over economic policies. The party declared that just order is the “true private enterprise regime” its implementation would require a heavy state control. The WP has shifted its economic policies from statist, protectionist position that was adopted by its predecessor the NSP to a free market economy (Özbudun, E, p. 88). . However as evidence from the policies of JEO this shift has not been clearly reflected As discussed in chapter 3 that the NSP was the party of petit bourgeoisie; small town merchants, tradesmen and shopkeepers in the 1970s but from the early 1980s there emerged a significant Muslim bourgeois. They often called as the Anatolian tigers represented by *MÜSIAD* (the Organisation of Muslim Businessmen and Industrialists). Obviously this development made the WP much more susceptible to the interests of the big business. It can be said that at the centre of this confusion as mentioned above over the just order lays this economic shift that Muslim bourgeoisie undergone. On the one hand this new Muslim bourgeoisie class made the WP to defend its interests while important proportion of its traditional support bases became more vulnerable because of the restructuring policies of neoliberalism.

³⁴³ Although the term “third way” has been revitalized by Giddens in the late 1990s, various political movements and various political persuasions have long used the idea of ‘third way’ as a political ideology. In this sense the Islamist leader N. Erbakan coined his economic policies as ‘*Adil Düzen*’ (Just Order) and claimed that it benefited from good sides of communism and capitalism and left their undesired sides out. There are some parallels between the “third way” as Giddens (see 1998, 2000) described and WP’s *Adil Düzen* as Erbakan formulated. But the differences are definitely more than similarities. Erbakan’s *Adil Düzen* indicated a confusion and had a very little chance to be implemented. The reader may wish to consult Giddens, A 1998 and 2000 for “third way” and Akgül, A 1997a; 1997b and Çakır, R 1994, pp.131-149 for *Adil Düzen* (Just Order) and its critique.

To avoid the repetition I must remind my reader that I have elaborated the term *adil düzen* (just order) in chapter 3, however it can be shortly reiterated that the concept of “just order” was used rather in rhetorical terms, it was not defined by the party nor debated properly neither it had any change to be implemented while the WP was in government. It can shortly be said that its full content and meaning was never clear. Nevertheless it was crown jewellery in the WP’s program and attracted attention, and voter support. Perhaps it owes its success to its complexity as well as offering something to everyone.

As argued earlier neoliberal-restructuring policies speeded of the migration of millions of rural population to the periphery of the major urban centres. There they were further disappointed and disillusioned with the mainstream political establishment. So this dissatisfaction of the urban masses, due to economic and political instability, changed the voting pattern of the pre -1980s. It is known that at times of crisis, especially among those newcomers, there is a tendency to turn to extremes, both on the right and the left.³⁴⁴ The urban lower middle and lower classes of the *gecekondus* sought an alternative to the incompetent, corrupted, elite of mainstream politics.

What has been seen is that the Islamist WP/VP emerged as the party of social justice and prosperity as its name implies. Its policy of Adil Düzen (Just Society) filled the gap left by the decline of the centre-left RPP due to its privatisation programme in the power (1991-1995). The VP strengthened its position amongst the urban poor and disadvantaged masses by expressing their grievances, concerns and identity problems. The VP’s social policies supported by massive and very active grassroots organisation which are in action not only at election time but all year around. As one of my informant said: “we are not 'seasonal workers' like the other parties' activists. “We are permanent workers in our neighbourhoods”.

³⁴⁴ Shmuelewitz, 1996, p. 168.

Since the Social Democratic party, the RPP, like many in Europe, lost its belief in its core ideology of freedom, equality and social justice and failed to put forward an alternative ideology against the rising new right but rather became a bad imitation of it, it has lost its traditional working class support. In return the Islamist WP/VP will continue to enjoy the support of the urban poor. In fact the mass support that the WP/VP attracts can in many ways be classified as an urban squatter movement unique in its mobilisation strategies under the VP's flag.

What the analysis of the role of the party organisations and grassroots activists has shown is that it was the profound role of the grassroots activists rather than religious fundamentalism that led to the ascendancy of political Islam into power in the 1990s. It has been shown that the discourse of Islamic fundamentalism has been defeated by the achievement of the grassroots activism. What has resulted through grassroots activism shows that the WP/VP as a modern mass party made its way to the government not by simply being Islamic fundamentalist or exploiting the religious values and rhetoric, but by winning the hearts and minds of millions of voters with its very effective and efficient election campaigns, carried out by its local party organisations. It has been observed throughout this study that party organisations and grassroots activists are highly influential in increasing the party's electoral fortunes.

Finally, what the lesson of the WP/VP shows is that party decline and the apparent political impasse in Turkish politics could have been prevented by the adoption of mass party system by other mainstream political parties in Turkey. Given the current trend of party decline, declining party attachment and party identification among citizens in Western Europe and North America, the mass party strategy might be a viable alternative there as well.

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APPENDIX I: QUESTIONNAIRE

This questionnaire will be used for interviews with grassroots activists of the Virtue Party in its local branches. Its aim is to investigate the ways in which local party organizations organize themselves and carry out their political activities in two different sub-districts of Ankara; Mamak and Keçiören. The findings of this field research will be used for a Doctorate dissertation that I have been doing in the University of Kent at Canterbury, United Kingdom. Many thanks for your help in advance.

1- Where were you born?

2- How long have you been living in Ankara?

3- Marital Status?

1 [] Single 2 [] Married 3 [] Divorced 4 [] widow 5 [] Other

4- The last school that you have finished?

5- Sex

1 [] Male

2 [] Female

3 [] Other

6- How old are you?

7- What is your occupation?

8- What is your income per month?

9- When you think the day that you first join the Refah (Welfare) Party (WP) / Fazilet (Virtue) Party (VP), did you approach the party for membership or did they approach you?

10- When did you join the party?

11- Can you tell me what was the most important reason for you to become a member of the party?

11- As a grassroots activist how often do you get contact with the people who are the supporter of the WP/VP or would become one in your local area?

12- Can you tell me about these meetings and contacts with your constituencies, what are the most commonly discussed issues, themes and demands from you?

13- What is your present position within the Virtue Party's local branch, e.g. president of this branch, deputy of president, treasury, secretary etc.?

14- Approximately how many hours do you spent for party activities in a month?

15- Apart from you is there any one in your family or close kin who are member of the WP/VP? e.g. are/where your parents /used to be/ member and vote for WP/VP?

16- Are you member of any other association, trade union, vakif (trust) etc.,?

17- Can you describe me the organizational structure of this local party organization?

18- If I ask, how would you describe your relation with the party?

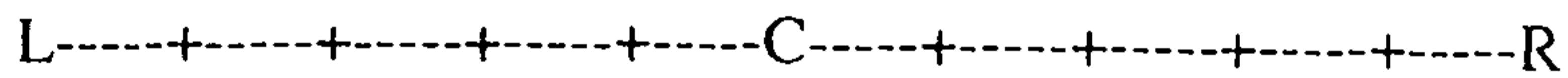
- a) As a sympathizer of the Virtue Party
- b) As a supporter of the VP
- c) As a voter of the VP
- d) As a grassroots activist of the VP
- e) Other

19- What do you think about the effects of grassroots activists, like yourself, on WP/VP's electoral performance in the elections?

20- How, do you think, the grassroots activists contributes for the electoral success of the WP/VP?

21- As is known that the Refah (Welfare) Party's share of votes had been rising since 1991. It become the biggest party in the 1994 and won more seats then any other parties in the parliament in the 1995 general elections. What do you think the most important reason was for the WP's victory?

22- How can you define, on the below scale, the place of the Virtue Party within the Turkish politics?



23- Why do you think the people votes and supports the WP/VP?

24- What is your opinion about the WP's governmental performance?

25- Do you believe that newly founded Virtue party will successfully replace the Welfare party?

26- In what sense, do you think, the Virtue party is different from the Welfare party? What are the new strategies, policies and ideas that developed with the foundation of the Virtue party?

27- It has been widely acknowledged that until its closure the WP had an efficient and very well organized local party organization. Do you think that the Virtue party have succeeded to set up the similar grassroots organizations?

28- Could you, shortly, tell me what kind of activities have been carried out by the grassroots activists?

29- If you were asked to scale the significance of the grassroots activism on the party's electoral performance, how would you scale it?

- 1 [] Very important 2 [] Important 3 [] Not so important
4 [] Insignificant 5 [] Other.....

30- Can you tell me how do you approach to the people in your area and what are the similarities in between you and the people that you talk with?

31- Where do you, usually, meet with potential voters to canvass?

32- What is your opinion regarding the place of religion within the politics?

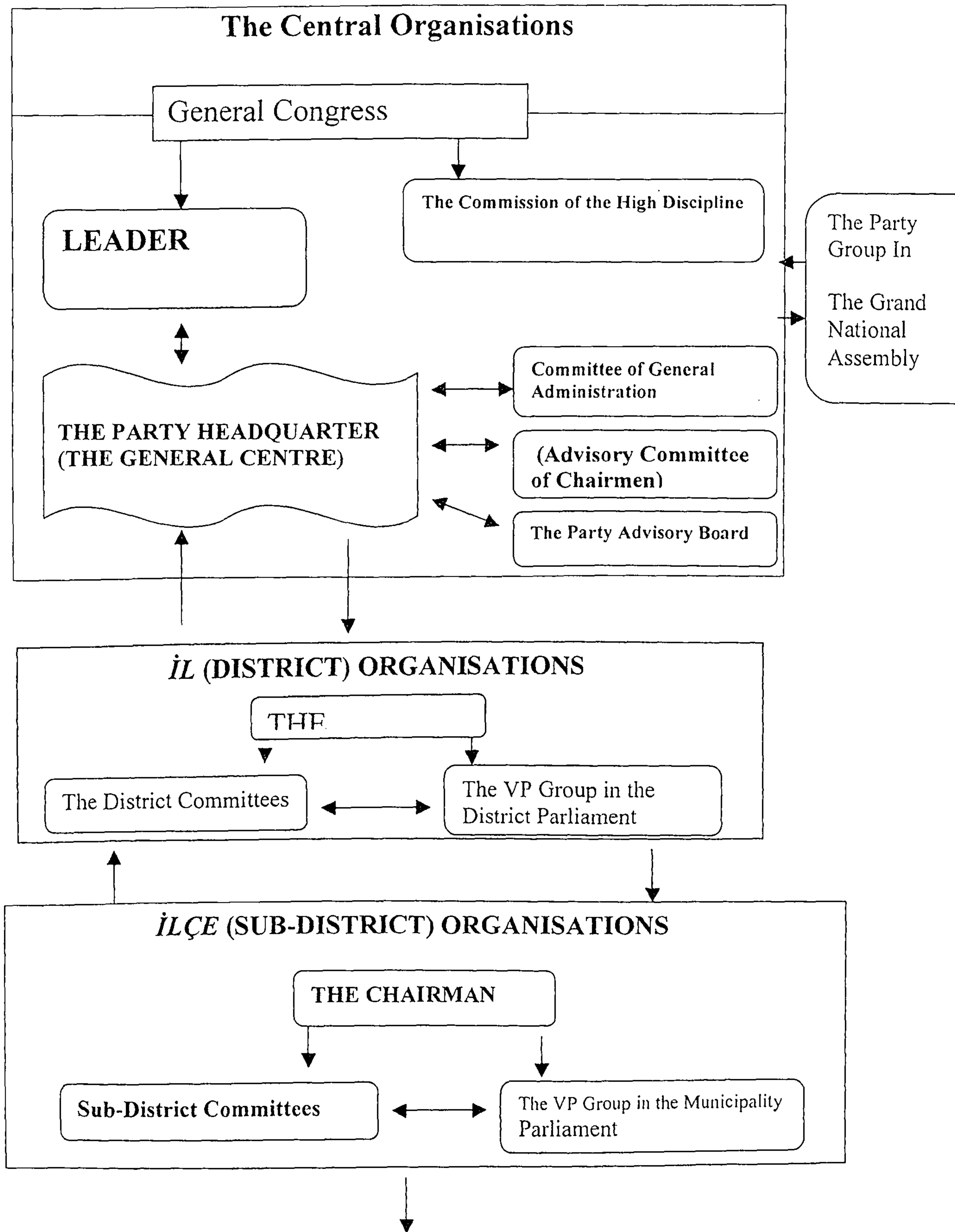
33- What is your opinion on the separation of religion from the state, do you think that state and religion can be separate from each other?

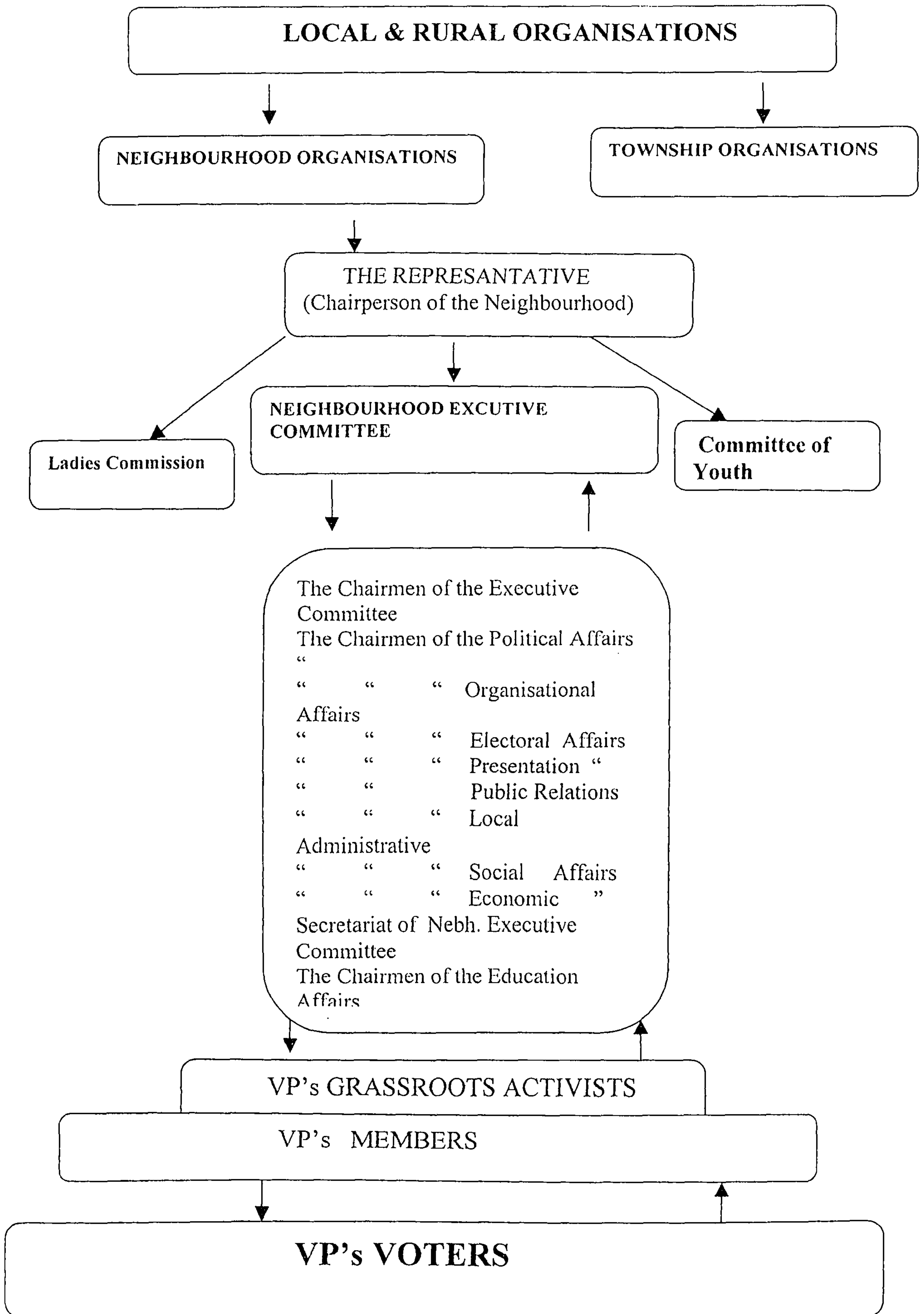
34- What is it, in your opinion that distinguishes Virtue party from the rest of the political parties in Turkey?

35- Is there any thing that you wanted to ask me or add to?

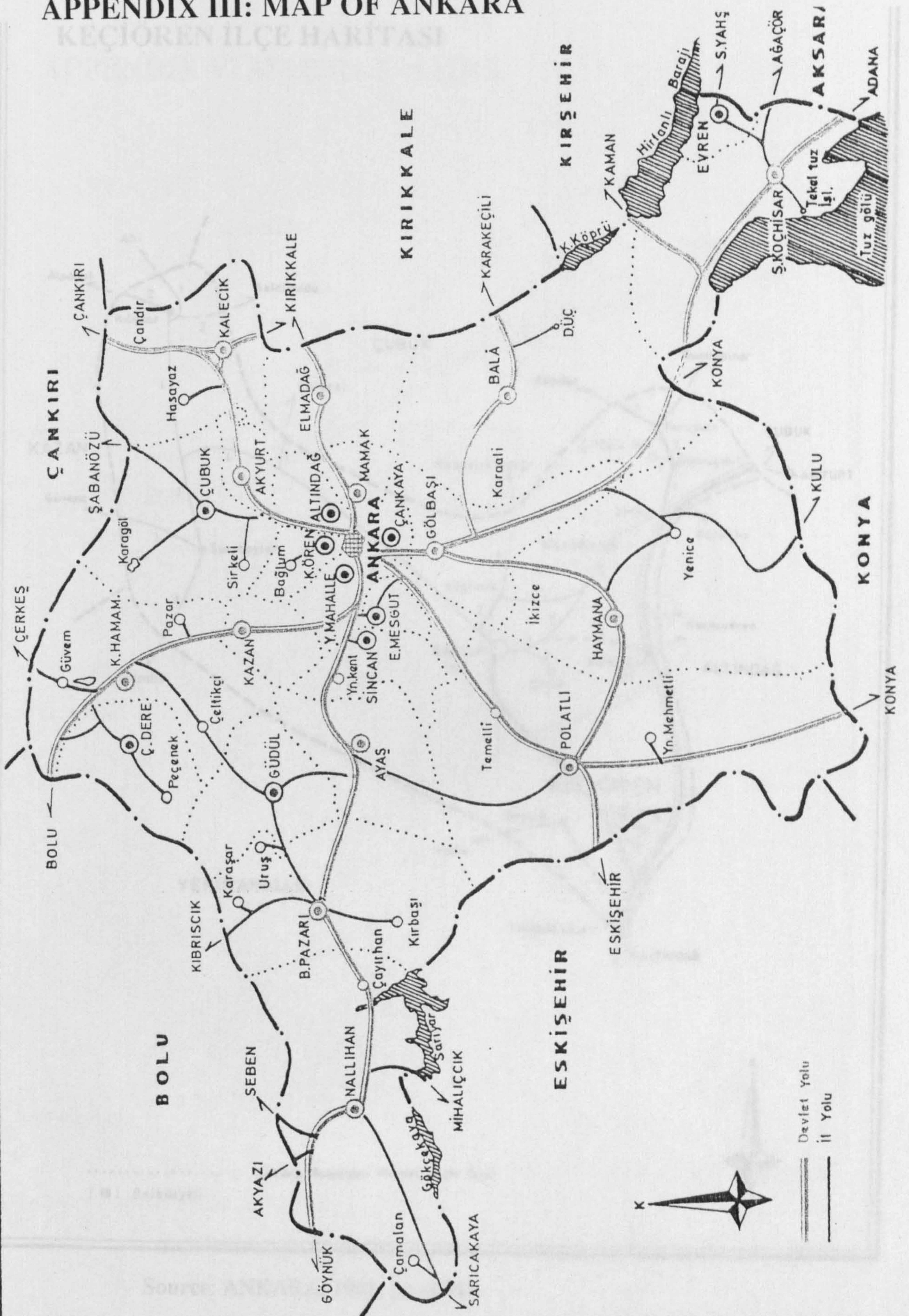
Thank you very much for your time.

APPENDIX II: THE ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE VP



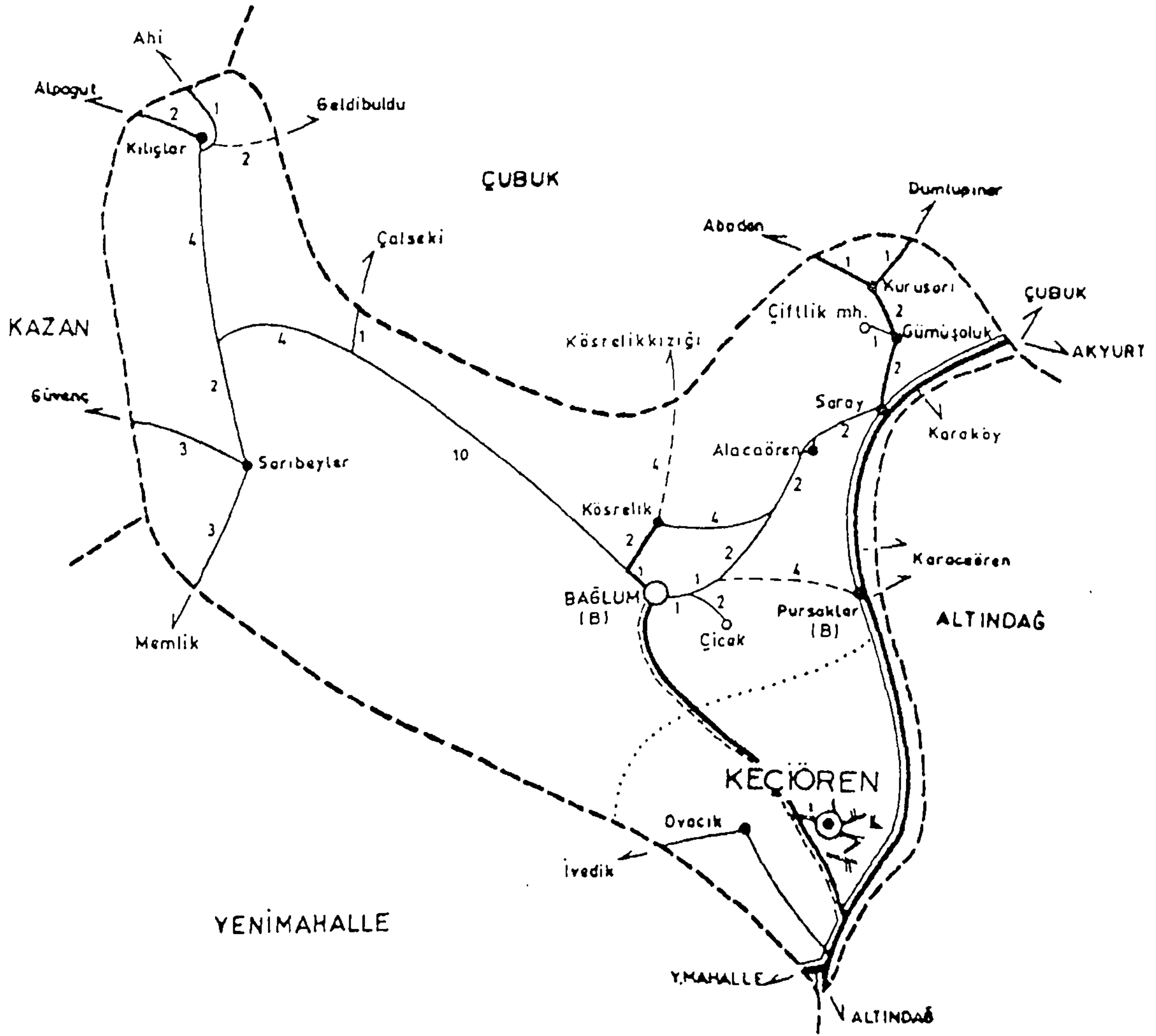


APPENDIX IV: MAP OF KEÇİÖREN
 APPENDIX III: MAP OF ANKARA
 KEÇİÖREN İLÇE HARİTASI



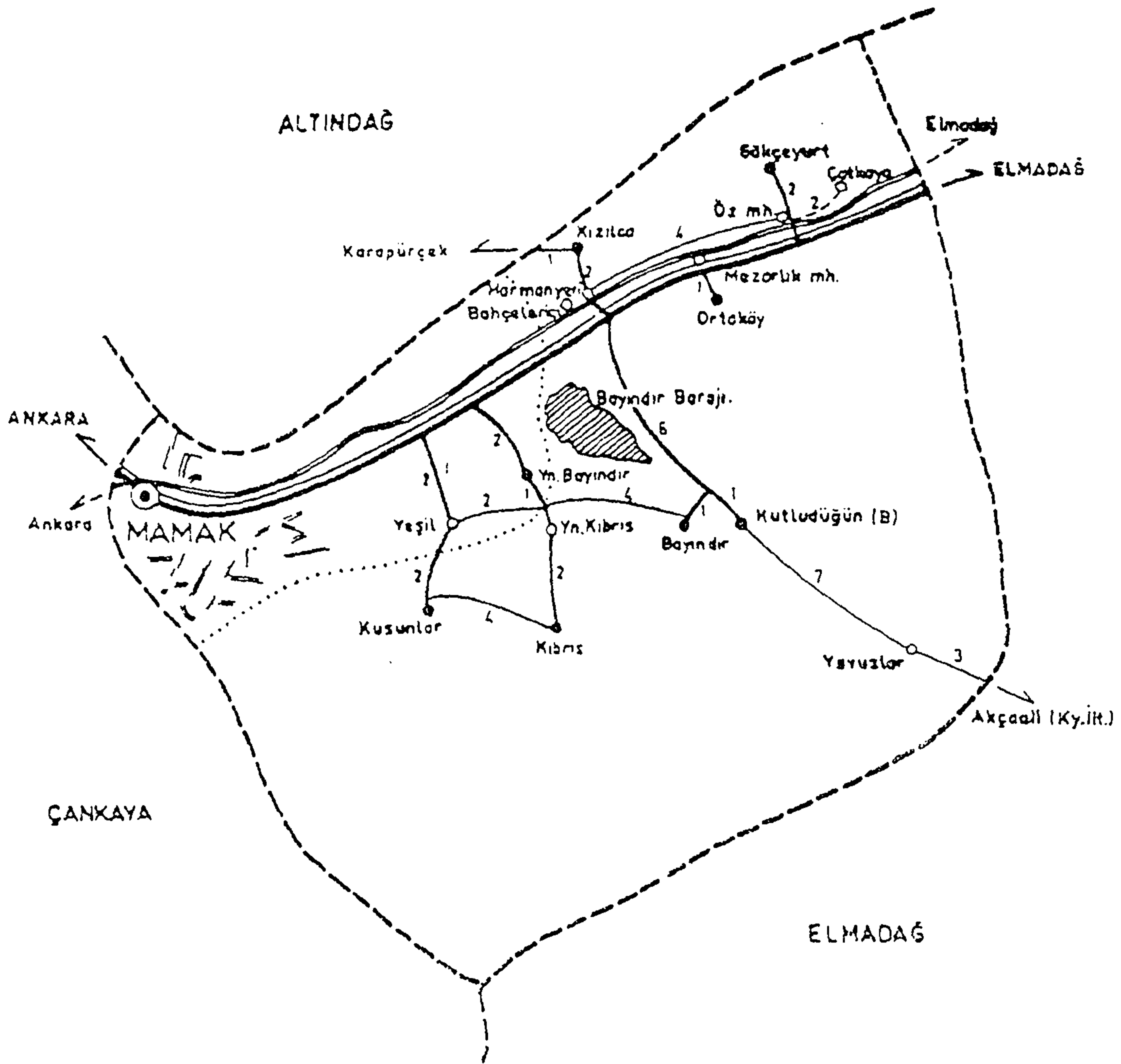
APPENDIX IV: MAP OF KEÇİÖREN

KEÇİÖREN İLÇE HARİTASI



..... Ankara Belediyesi Hizmet Alanı Sınırı.
 (B) Belediyeli

APPENDIX V: MAP OF MAMAK



..... Ankara Belediyesi Hizmet Alanı Sınırı
(B) Beladiyeli



Source : ANKARA, 1991, p.xvi/351

APPENDIX VI: TURKISH POLITICAL PARTIES, 1983-2001

1 THE CENTRE-RIGHT PARTIES

1.1 The Motherland Party (MP) (1983-)

The Motherland party (MP) was found by Turgut Özal and thirty of his friends in 30 May 1983. Özal before establishing the MP had close ties to financial circles in the West especially the IMF and the World Bank. For this reason he had been consulted by the military elite and appointed as 'economic supremo' in the military government. Before establishing the MP he worked as a technocrat in various governments including that of S. Demirel. In many ways he was the key actor and main implementer of the IMF program that was virtually directed by Washington (Ahmad, F 1993: 183).

The Motherland Party has led an attempt to create a new sort of world. Its appeal at the top is to internationally minded, market oriented industrialists and businessmen. At the lower levels the party appeals to small businessmen, particularly to those in this class, and they are many, who are conservative in social and religious matters. ... To a marked extent the party is not apparently a successor to the Justice Party, even though some 38 per cent of its provincial and district leaders had served in local organisations of the Justice Party, ... (Dodd, C. H. 1990: 115-16).

Üstün Ergüder (1991: 153) too emphasizes that the MP is not the reincarnation of any of the pre-1980 parties. Instead of the NDP (National Democracy Party), Özal's MP as a centre-right, moderate force, has served to draw back into the mainstream supporters of those pre-1980 parties of the right (National Salvation Party, National Action Party) who were formally engaged in anti-system protest. Statistical analysis indicates that MP created a new cleavage in Turkish politics which had cut across the old cleavages of the right and perhaps extending into the centre-left.

It is true that the MP was not born as the continuation of any of those pre-1980 parties. But because of its place in the centre-right and its ideology it was in fact the

carrier of the DP and JP traditions. At the beginning Özal and his friends needed to make it explicit time and time again that their party was not the continuation of any pre-1980 parties. This was purely a legal requirement because the 1982 constitution, like subsequent ones bans the establishment of any party which is a continuation of a banned political party. So if they admitted that they were representing the JP the court would have closed down the MP.

Also the specific conditions of an after coup period made the MP take its initial path. It did appeal and indeed managed to gather support from three different wings of political spectrum; from liberals, nationalists and Islamists until the late 1980s. This combination of different ideologies gave an enormous electoral advantage to the MP because until 1987 the nationalists that were represented by the NAP and Islamists by the NSP had no choice but support the MP until their own parties were allowed to enter the elections.

1.2 The True Path Party (TTP) (1983)

Like many of these 17 parties the True Path Party was also established in 1983 by a close friend of Süleyman Demirel. The TPP was the second major party on the centre-of-right and as opposed to the MP it made no secret of the fact that it was the continuation of the DP and JP mission (See Acar, F 1991: 188; Dodd, C. H. 1990: 116).

The TPP takes a liberal attitude towards economics, and is fiercely opposed to any military intervention in politics. The party stresses democracy and respect for electoral outcomes. The TPP still seems to see itself, as representative the periphery against the state elites. In fact its electoral profile in the 1987 showed it to represent, rather, the small towns and villages in the countryside, a rather narrower definition of the periphery than intended (Dodd, C. H 1990: 116-117). The social bases of the TPP, however, have changed over time and the MP and TPP have converged a lot. Literally they became the same parties under different names and leadership. This situation is not just limited to the centre right parties but applies to those on the centre left too. It can be said that the duplication of the political parties in the centre-right and centre-left (the RPP and DLP) has emerged as an unintended consequence of the

military coup of 1980. They are the same parties in terms of their social bases, ideologies, policies and organisational structures.

When the political ban on the pre-1980 leaders was lifted, many among Demirel's followers and sympathizers, as well as those in the state bureaucracy and private sector, expected that Demirel would play a major role in Turkish politics. Clearly this high expectation encouraged further and facilitated the maintenance of an active party network (Acar, F 1991: 189).

2 The Welfare Party WP (1983-1998)

When the generals decided to allow the establishment of new political parties the old cadres of the NSP decided to found the Refah Partisi (Welfare Party) under the leadership of Ali Turkmen, a lawyer and ex advocate of N. Erbakan, and 33 founding members on July 19, 1983. Due to N. Erbakan's prison sentence and ten years prohibition from the politics Ahmet Tekdal, a close aide of Erbakan, became its first leader. The WP had to find survival strategies under the military's scrutiny. It could not say it was a totally new party, but an open admission could have jeopardized its survival too. So given these conditions the WP highlighted the slogans like *Milli Görüş* (National View) and *Milli Şuur* (National Conscious) to send out the message that it was the continuation of the tradition of NOP and NSP (Çakir, R 1994: 24).

Because the constitution bans (article 163) any political party from 'exploiting' religion for political purposes and prohibits any closed party from reopening with the same or a different name, the leaders of the *Milli Görüş* (national view) had to manage a survival strategy by keeping a distance from the NSP at the same time finding some cunning tactics to send the right message to their traditional grassroots. The choice of the name for the new party "**Refah**" literally means **welfare** or **prosperity** signalled the continuity between the NOP/NSP and this new party.

It is true that the WP inherited the NSP's political heritage but its theory, rhetoric and social bases has significantly changed (Şen, S 1995:8-9). Similarly, Hakan Yavuz (1997) argued that the political idiom, organizational structure, social bases of the WP couldn't be truly grasped without the knowledge of the NSP.

“The NS [NSP] represented those who were not fully integrated culturally and economically into the “modernist” centre. It stressed Islamic mores as a cure for social problems, and its goal was to return to traditional social and cultural life. The WP, in contrast, modernizes traditional norms and institutions by breathing new life into them. Moreover, the expansions of modern conditions and economic growth, instead of undermining traditional networks and belief systems, have infused religious institutions and belief systems with new meanings.” (Ibid: 70).

It is obvious that the WP established as a continuity of what used to be called the NSP the only representative of the political Islam in Turkey. However, the WP took the NSP forward by modernizing its structure, ideology and main policies. The changes are gradual in some areas like attitude of secularism, foreign policy etc., but radical in eras like organizational structure and campaigning methods.

It can be argued that the most distinctive characteristic of the WP is its ability to harness the traditional with the modern in terms of policies, organizational structure and campaigning methods. In addition to that, because the WP is the only mass political party, and maintains a very large, well organized, highly committed and highly active grassroots organizations it has played very important and distinctive role in Turkish politics since its establishment.

In their study Katz, R and Mair, P (1995: 2-28) identified four models of political parties. They are the elite (cadre), mass, catchall, and cartel parties. According to Özbudun, E (2000:86) “Most Turkish parties combine some characteristics of cadre and catchall parties, with some elements of cartel parties.” He pointed out that except for the WP none of the Turkish parties have gone through a mass party phase.

Organizationally, the WP is the only Turkish party that comes close to the model of a mass party, or a party of social integration. But the WP lacks one of the characteristics of the mass party that is the intra party democracy that is usually associated with mass parties (ibid: 92).

Despite its shortcomings in terms of intra party democracy, the WP managed distance itself from other mainstream parties and moved towards mass party, which was a positive development, a good example for the improvement of Turkish democracy.

It is the continuation of the WP that was closed down by the court. Before its closure the WP was the largest party in parliament with 21.4 percent of vote and 158 MPs in the parliament. As the WP closed all of its MPs and mayors all around the country joined the VP. So it became the largest party within one year of its foundation.

I examined the continuities and changes from the WP to VP in chapter 6. The VP represents the same electorate group as the WP but there are discontinuities, new approaches, and policies that will be discussed later in chapter six.

3 THE CENTER-LEFT PARTIES

3.1 The Populist Party (PP), 1983-1985

There were two centre left parties when the ban on politics was lifted: the SDPP and the PP. But because the SDPPs candidates were vetoed by the NSC it was effectively prevented taking part in the elections. The Populist Party was established on May 20 1983 under the leadership of Necdet Calp. The PP goals are to promote social justice and social welfare, to raise the standard of living of the workers. It gave a special emphasis on etatism and free parliamentary democracy.³⁴⁵ The PP wanted to fill the vacuum on the left side of the spectrum.

3.2. The Social Democratic People's Party (SDPP) 1983-1995

The Social Democratic People's Party was established on 31 July 1983 by a group calling themselves the 'Social Democratic Force'. They were all ex-mayors from the RPP. It was headed by Erdal İnönü a respected scientist and son of İsmet İnönü, the charismatic leader of the RPP from 1938 to 1972. Two years later on 14 November 1985 Bulent Ecevit, veteran leader of the RPP founded another party in the centre-left called Democratic Left Party.³⁴⁶ According to Andrew Mango the SDPP stands in

³⁴⁵ See Geyikdağı, M. Y 1984: 151.

³⁴⁶ After nearly two decades of its establishment the DLP won an unexpected landslide victory at the last general elections (in 1999), received 21 percent of the votes. It is now senior partner of the three party coalition. Ecevit himself is now the prime minister of Turkey.

direct line of descent from the Republican People's Party (RPP), which was closed down after the military takeover. The Turkish social democratic parties are different in some aspects from their sister parties in Europe. As he (1991) argued, the biggest difference between European social democratic parties and the SDPP in Turkey is the European SDP's were established as parties of opposition, of a radical sometimes violent opposition at least at the beginning but the SDPP was born as the party of the old establishment (pp.170-171). Actually these paradox that Mango highlights explains why the parties of the centre left in Turkey SDPP/PP/DLP/RPP never became Social Democratic parties like their counterparts in the many West European countries. From the outset the RPP was the party of the establishment and remained so until the 1970s. In the 1970s it changed its rhetoric by adopting Social Democratic policies but its elitist party structure remained. It can be said that SDPP has never developed large grassroots organisations to get organised at the local level. The SDPP had the characteristics of both a cadre and an elitist party.

As Dodd, C. H. (1990: 117) argued the SDPP's economic policies were a mixture of both the free market economy on the one hand and a planned statist, closed economic model on the other. It defended the State Economic Enterprises, economic growth, and social justice. (Ibid: 117). As happened in many developing countries this confusion over the economic policies proved costly for the SDPP. It lost a great deal of its public support especially among its traditional bases throughout the 1980s and 1990s. The more the SDPP moved towards the neoliberal economic policies the less it appealed to the lower classes.

In 1985 both parties, the SDPP and PP, united under the name of Social Democratic Populist Party shortly known as SHP. Some writers prefer to use the full acronym SDPP. This unification obviously gave the centre -left a boost and they benefited from this in the following elections.

3.3. The Republican Peoples Party (RPP) 1992

The RPP was originally founded by M. Kemal himself in 1919. After twelve years of closure the RPP reopened on 19 June 1992. Those who were around the RPP hoped

to catch the glamour and success that the pre 1980s RPP enjoyed. But this was an optimistic expectation. It entered a very crowded political arena, were already containing two centre-left parties: the SHP, and DLP. To prevent further fragmentation and have a chance of winning the elections the two parties (the SDDP and RPP) decided to merge. They did so, in 1995 the SHP dissolved itself and joined the RPP.

3.4 The Democratic Left Party (DLP) 1985

Rahşan Ecevit established the DLP on 14 November 1985. According to Ecevit, apparently the leader and the architect of the DLP, its origins go back to 1960s (Ecevit, B 1999). When the DLP was founded there were already two other parties on the centre-left, the SDPP, and the PP, which later merged with the SDPP. There is no substantial ideological difference between the SDPP and DLP, even though Ecevit would strongly argue the opposite. Perhaps the most visible difference has been the relation with the RPP. Unlike the SDPP, the DLP does not claim to be a continuation of the RPP. Ecevit characterized the RPP as elitist and too keen to do everything from above- “for the people but against the people”. (Özbudun E 2000: 97). Apart from these minor differences the two parties share similar policies.

Until the beginning of the 1990s the DLP did not win any significant electoral listening. But its fortunes turned at the 1999 elections. It received 8.5 percent vote in 1987, 10.6 percent in 1991, 14.7 percent in 1995 and became the largest party by receiving 22.1 percent vote in 1999 elections.³⁴⁷ At present, the DLP is the senior partner of three party coalition government with the NAP another surprising front-runner of the 1999 elections.

4 THE SMALLER PARTIES

4.1 The Nationalist Democracy Party (NDP)

The third party to take part in the 1983 general elections was the Nationalist Democracy Party, established in 16 May 1983 by retired general Turgut Sunalp. It

³⁴⁷ Statistics taken from Ecevit, B 1999.

was a centre-right, 'state party' and clearly the party of the military elite.³⁴⁸ At that time the military elite was extremely worried and distrustful of the political parties. For this reason the NDP was set up by the military to have a horse in the race to control the politics. But it did not work out very well. At the first general elections in 1983 the DP emerged as the smallest of all, receiving 17.7 per cent of the votes. Soon it disappeared from the Turkish political scene all together. The Motherland Party government under Özal's leadership was the dominating political force of the 1980s.

4.2 The National Action Party (NAP)

The NAP is also the continuation of the pre-1980 NAP, the ultra nationalist party. Until the elections of 1999, the NAP was one of the smaller parties and never exceeded the 10 percent national threshold in the elections. But this dramatically changed in the 1999 election when the NAP doubled its vote from 8.2 per cent in 1995 to 18.1 per cent. It is an ultra nationalist party. In the last couple of years it has increased its share of votes. For many commentators this is due to the intensified Kurdish issue combined with general incompetence of the mainstream parties for last two decades.

4.3 The People's Democracy Party (PDP)

The DPP is a predominantly Kurdish party. It defends the cultural rights of the Kurdish minority mainly in South East Turkey where it has between 40 to 50 per cent of electoral support. However so far it has not been able to exceed 5 percent of the total votes at national level. Also there are other smaller parties of the socialist tendencies, some of them are following Marxist-Leninist ideology such as Özgürlük ve Demokrasi Partisi (Freedom and Democracy Party (FDP), Emegın Partisi (EMEP) (Labour's Party). The EMEP is a leftist/Marxist, small but very vocal party of Turkish working class. On the extreme right there is Büyük Birlik Partisi BBP (Great Unity Party (GUP) and others.

³⁴⁸ See Ahmad, F 1993: 188; and Tosun, T , 1999: 156-160.