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Against All Winds: The Populism–Nationalism Axis in the Rhetoric of the Nationalist Action Party ***Tüm Rüzgarlara Karşı: Popülizm Milliyetçilik Ekseninde Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi'nin Söylemi***

Abstract

The rise of radical right populist parties in Europe has made it essential for students of political science to understand this amalgam of populism and nationalism. Textbook examples of new actors on the political scene are characterized by a strong populist discourse and a significant nationalist/nativist ideology. The Nationalist Action Party of Turkey ranks high in the list of populist actors (Inglehart & Norris, 2016), and we demonstrate the divergent and convergent points in the populism–nationalism axis, with an emphasis on the rhetoric of Devlet Bahçeli, the leader of the Nationalist Action Party.

Öz

Avrupa'da radikal sağ populist partilerin yükselişi, siyaset bilimi çalışanların milliyetçilik ve popülizm arasındaki bu kaynaşmanın nedenlerini tartışmaya itti. Popülizm konusundaki çalışmaların tipik örnekleri olan partilerin kuvvetli bir populist söylemin yanısıra milliyetçi/etnikçi ideolojilere de sahip olmaları çok defa vurgulandı. Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi (MHP) Inglehart ve Norris (2016) gibi karşılaştırmalı çalışma yapanlar tarafından oluşturulan listelerde en üst sıralarda gösterilmektedir. Bu yazıda MHP lideri Devlet Bahçeli'nin konuşmalarındaki söyleme odaklanarak popülizm-milliyetçilik ekseninde ortak ve farklı noktaları göstermeyi amaçlıyoruz.

Keywords

Nationalism, populism, the Nationalist Action Party, Turkey

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Nationalism, nativism and the radical right, are closely related three terms, and the differences between them are particularly hard to distinguish and explain in the foggy atmosphere created by populist politics. However, crystallizing these differences is important not only for academic concerns but also for a better understanding of the current political situation in various parts of the world. As Bonikowski (2017) observed, the lack of analytical clarity has hindered accounts of the causes and consequences of ethno-nationalist populism. The growing literature on populism should therefore engage more with the existing literature on the three terms (nationalism, nativism, and the radical right), and particularly on nationalism, given its theoretical richness. It should also engage more with the current literature on republicanism and democracy, which includes but is not limited to the idea of popular sovereignty.

Although right-wing populism has strong national tones, to call all nationalist parties popular is misleading. The recent development of the extreme right has often been addressed in terms of the concept of populism (Caiani & Della Porta, 2011), and Mudde (2017) has underlined the danger that the term may mask the nativism of the radical right. In the same study, Mudde notes that the populist radical right combines populism with two other core ideological features: authoritarianism and nativism. Thus, we believe that this important discussion needs to be further elaborated both theoretically and empirically in the literature on nationalism (De Cleen, 2017; De Cleen & Stavrakakis, 2017).

Within the limits of this article, we focus on the Nationalist Action Party (NAP) of Turkey,¹ which has been classified as a radical right (Çınar & Arıkan, 2002), far right (Heper & Ince, 2006), ultra-nationalist (Arıkan 2003; Bora & Can, 1991, 2004), and populist party (Inglehart & Norris, 2016, p. 44). We will elaborate on how the NAP, despite its alliance with the populist Justice and Development Party (JDP-AKP) (Aytaç & Elçi, 2019) is a nationalist party, but not a populist party. By analyzing the speeches made by Devlet Bahçeli, the leader of the NAP, in the six months before the last election, the limited aim of this article is therefore to determine whether there is any trace of populism in the nationalist discourse of the NAP.

Nationalism and Populism

Patriotism (emotional attachment to a political community) is an ancient phenomenon that is much older than the idea that nations are the only units which deserve and can claim loyalty. In the context of modernity, however, the concept of patriotism is inextricably linked to nationalism. Gellner pointed out that nations can only be defined in terms of the specifically modern imperative of nationalism, which states that cultural and political boundaries ought to coincide: “Nationalism is primarily a political principle which holds that the political and national unit should be congruent” (1983, p. 1). Gellner also argued that nationalism is a product of industrial social organization and the nation being an abstract, universal community, constituting a universal culture, linking the inhabitants of a territory of their state which industrialism requires. Nationalism as an ideology creating national identities has been

a legitimizing tool for states (Breuilly, 1993). What legitimates every kind of governing body is the consent of its people—the nation. The nation-state is the institutionalized political power in certain historical conditions where the nation is the legitimizing source of this information, and nationalism is the ideology that tries to show that this is the “only” “successful” “universal” political value for that legitimation.

Populism, on the other hand, is harder to define. It has been regarded as a thin-centered ideology (Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2017), a frame or worldview (Caiani & Della Porta, 2011), and as a discourse (Meléndez & Kaltwasser, 2017). Nevertheless, there is broad agreement about the central elements of a definition of populism: its people-centered characteristics (government of, by, and for the people; Canovan, 1999); its anti-establishment characteristics (the sovereignty of good people in sharp contrast to the corrupted elites; Mudde, 2004); the claims of populist parties and their leaders to represent the supposed general will of the people (Mudde, 2004); and, last but not least, the sense that populism is against pluralism and that any opposing idea has no legitimacy (Müller, 2017).

There are overlaps between the key ideas of populism and nationalism, and examples of national populism exist. De Cleen and Stavrakakis (2017) did important work not only in determining the distinction between populism and nationalism but also in formulating an agenda for how the empirical connections between the two can be researched. They suggested a discourse-theoretical perspective for elaborating how nationalism has been prominently articulated in terms of populism. The study of these articulations will contribute to a better understanding of the complexity and variety of populist politics.

Differentiating nationalism and populism is not an easy task. The ultimate source of political power in a democracy derives from a collective body, and what constitutes that collective body is a vital question. Therefore, the starting point is an examination of the terms *people* and *nation*. The two terms are related but need further elaboration. For nationalism, the nation confers legitimacy; for populism, legitimacy is conferred by the people. Mudde and Kaltwasser (2017) noted a combination of three meanings: the people as sovereign, the common people, and the people as the nation. According to Yack (2001), nation and people are two distinct ways of imagining community, a nation being a community over time and a people being a community over space (Yack, 2001, p. 521). National community precedes our existence and survives our death. A people, however, exists in a kind of eternal present with no questioning of its formation and building; unlike the nation, it is a demos-body of citizens.

The key to the politicization of national loyalties is the idea of popular sovereignty. The *politicization of the national community* and the *nationalization of the political community* are important elements in the discussion of the so-called people-centered perspective of populism. The role of nationalisms in constituting a people and its role in developing notions of equality that bring people together into an individuated political agent leading to the institutionalization of public spheres (Calhoun, 1997).

One of the core concepts of populism is the notion of the general will (Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2017). According to the populist paradigm, politics should be an expression of the general will of the people, and the leader can speak on the people's behalf (Mudde, 2004). Thus, for both the nation and the people, the emphasis is on sovereignty and will. The supremacy of this collective body's claims over other claims to individual allegiance and full sovereignty is the persistent aim of its political program, which makes frequent reference to the general will as something different from the sum of each individual's wills. Hence, nationalism has a more clearly defined telos: the survival of the nation and the state. Thus, it is clear that the relationships between nationalism and popular sovereignty (Yack, 2001) and between popular sovereignty and populism (Canovan, 2004) need further study, and that this is crucial for democracy (Abts & Rummens, 2007; Akkerman, 2003; Espejo, 2011).²

The role of elites is another point to elaborate on in understanding the differences between populism and nationalism. The opposition between a so-called *corrupted elite*, on the one hand, and a supposedly *pure people*, on the other hand, is essential to populism (Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2017). In this respect, nationalism is different. Identity constructions put forward by political elites are powerful tools that policy-makers use to communicate with their electorate, which is supposed to form the *imagined community* of a nation (Anderson, 1991). Although policy-makers cannot simply invent national identities, their use of collective identity construction, of symbols and myths with which people identify, is a means of increasing the legitimacy of their policies (Risse, Engelmann-Martin, Knope, & Roscher, 1999). Scholars have recognized the essential role that elites have played in the invention of nations. As Hutchinson (1992) pointed out, many believe that nationalism is not a product of nations; rather, it is nationalist elites that have invented nations.

Elaborating on the differences nationalism and populism, we will summarize the political context in which Bahçeli gave his speeches, and will elaborate on the idea of the Turkish nation in those speeches, and the words and the metaphors that are used. Then we will move on to consider the presentation of the survival and the will of the Turkish nation and the role played by the NAP in these existential struggles.

The NAP and the 2018 Elections

When Devlet Bahçeli called for snap elections on August 26, a very symbolic date -the first victory of Turks in Anatolia in 1071-, no elections had been anticipated. According to the constitutional amendments approved following the referendum of April 16, 2017, the presidential and general elections were to be conducted simultaneously in August 2019. Many political actors were preparing their strategies for the local elections to be held in March 2019, which would function as the initial round of the presidential elections. Hence, Bahçeli's call came as a surprise to most people.

The newly adopted articles of the constitution allow for snap elections in two circumstances: if the president asks for them or if the parliament dissolves itself. In this case, as the President, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, had made no such demand, the response to Bahçeli's call had to come from parliament. The rationale for the snap election was simple; according to Bahçeli, the remaining 18 months before the planned elections was too long for the transition to the presidential system approved in the referendum, and during that time the country would be very vulnerable to internal and external threats (*Hürriyet Daily News*, April 17, 2018). On April 18, Erdoğan and Bahçeli, the two leaders of the People's Alliance that had been announced in February, met, and Erdoğan declared June 24 as the date for the snap election. The President stated that the election was necessary to overcome the uncertainty caused by the cross-border conflict in Syria and the situation in Northern Iraq (*The Guardian*, April 18, 2018).

This date left limited time for campaigning. Political parties had to declare their decision to form an alliance by April 30; candidates for the presidential post had to apply by May 5; and the list of parties had to be submitted to the Supreme Board of Elections by May 21 (*Hurriyet Daily News*, April 26, 2018). This tight timetable pushed the parties to focus on their presidential campaigns rather than on the parliamentary elections. The People's Alliance nominated Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, and the other parties preferred to put forward their own candidates instead of an umbrella candidate. The candidate of the Republican People's Party (RPP-CHP) was the popular politician Muharrem İnce, and the leader of the Good Party (İYİ Party), Meral Akşener, also ran for the presidency. The other candidates were Selahattin Demirtaş of the People's Democratic Party (HDP), Temel Karamollaoğlu of the Felicity Party (Saadet), and Doğu Perinçek of the Homeland Party.

The month before the elections was dominated by the campaigns of the presidential candidates. Erdoğan held 43 public meetings in 31 provinces, İnce traveled to 65 provinces to speak in 107 public meetings, and Akşener held 71 meetings in 56 provinces. As Demirtaş was in jail, he was unable to participate in any meetings. Debates between the presidential candidates defined the public agenda in both conventional and social media.³

As the NAP had chosen to support Erdoğan as its candidate for the presidency, its campaign activities were limited. Bahçeli held three public meetings and five consultation meetings in selected provinces. The party was not active on social or conventional media, preferring a very low-profile communications strategy. The NAP did not use mass communication channels such as national television, newspapers, or radio, and its activity on social media was insignificant compared to that of the other parties (Özkan, 2018). This strategy and the focus on the presidential campaigns created uncertainty about the performance of the NAP in the parliamentary elections. The emergence of the Good Party resulted in a shift of votes away from the NAP, but the extent of this shift remains unclear (Uras, 2018). Polls broadcast before the elections were pessimistic, predicting on average that the NAP's share of the vote in the parliamentary elections would be less than 8 percent, with almost none of the pollsters estimating it at more than 10 percent (*Indigo*, June 16, 2018).

The election results came as a shock to many people. The NAP received 11 percent of the total votes compared to the 53 percent obtained by the People's Alliance. The electoral system translated this into 344 seats in parliament for the People's Alliance and 49 for the NAP. This gave the People's Alliance a majority in parliament. However, the JDP needed the support of the NAP; in the final composition of parliament, the JDP had 290 seats, and the NAP's role became crucial. Thus, owing to its disproportionate power in the parliamentary calculus, the NAP emerged as the major winner of the parliamentary elections, despite the birth of the Good Party.

The rise of the NAP has attracted a lot of attention. Geographical analyses show that the NAP is more successful in the Central Anatolia, Western and Eastern Black Sea, and Western Anatolia regions, which are known for their nationalist tendencies. Although the NAP lost a significant portion of its vote to the Good Party, it succeeded in attracting some support (around 4 to 5 percentage points) from the voter base of the JDP. The typical profile of NAP voters is young and male with relatively low levels of education and traditional conservative attitudes (KONDA, 2018). According to an exit poll conducted by Ipsos (2018), NAP voters chose the party because of the importance it accords to the unity of the nation and the fight against terrorism.

In explaining the NAP's success, some researchers have focused on voting anomalies such as the extraordinary increases in the NAP vote in Van (155 percent), Muş (160 percent), and Mardin (181 percent) (Ağirel, 2018). Others have explained the NAP's success in terms of the rise of ultranationalism in Turkey, which has been fueled by changes in the discourse and the policies of the JDP governments since the 2015 general elections (Kınıkloğlu, 2018; Stevenson, 2018). According to Kadercan (2018), Erdoğan's mild ultranationalism channeled some JDP voters to the NAP, the real owner of the nationalist camp. The same author gives some of the credit for this to Bahçeli.

Method

De Cleen and Stavrakakis (2017) demonstrated that the choice of methodological tools to understand complex phenomena such as populism and nationalism depends on the definitions used. Populism can be measured in terms of individual attitudes or predispositions that are crystallized in a populist context or frame. These populist predispositions are measured through surveys. Although there is not yet any standardized questionnaire or battery for this approach, attempts have recently been made to produce one (Akkerman, Mudde, & Zaslove, 2014; Bonikowski, 2017; Elchardus & Spruyt, 2016; Hawkins, Read, & Pauwels, 2017; Hawkins, Riding, & Mudde, 2012; Inglehart & Norris, 2016; Schulz et al., 2017; Van Hauwaert & Van Kessel, 2018).

Since many scholars define populism as a supply-side phenomenon observable in the discourses of actors, alternative methods are generally used. The speeches or declarations of party leaders (Cranmer, 2011; Hawkins, 2009; Pareschi & Albertini, 2018; Vasilopoulou, Halikopoulou, & Exadaktylos, 2014; Wodak, 2015) and party manifestos (Pappas, 2014; Rooduijn, 2013; Rooduijn, De Lange, & Van der Brug, 2014; Rooduijn & Pauwels, 2011) are analyzed in addition to the campaign materials of political parties (Caiani & Kröll, 2017). Newspapers and other media outlets also provide data for measuring populism at the discourse level (Bale, Kessel, & Taggart, 2011; Ekström, Patrona, & Thornborrow, 2018; Engesser, Ernst, Esser, & Büchel, 2017; Koopmans & Muis, 2009; Mazzoleni & Bracciale, 2018; Rooduijn, 2014).

Authors studying the supply side of populism employ different methods. Some prefer to use the holistic grading method (Aslanidis, 2018; Bernhard, Kriesi, & Weber, 2015; Bonikowski & Gidron, 2016; Hawkins, 2009; Pauwels, 2011). Another method of analyzing populist discourse is thematic text analysis, which divides the text into coding units (paragraphs, phrases, or quasi-phrases) and allocates them to previously determined code categories. This method is useful for producing quantitative data, and it opens up the possibility of further statistical analysis (Jagers & Walgrave, 2007; Rooduijn et al., 2014; Rooduijn & Pauwels, 2011; Vasilopoulou et al., 2014). The development of computer-based content analysis methods has opened the way to more technical and computerized analyses of populism. For example, some authors have developed a dictionary of populist terms in order to focus on the frequency of these terms in selected texts (Bonikowski & Gidron, 2016; Pauwels, 2011; Rooduijn & Pauwels, 2011).

In order to understand the nationalistic rhetoric construction of the NAP and to determine whether it is populist, we focused on the speeches made by Devlet Bahçeli between January 2018 and June 2018 (the last party meeting before the elections). These 41 speeches were made by Bahçeli on different occasions: at election meetings (5 speeches), at press conferences (3 speeches), at parliamentary group meetings (10 speeches), and at other events (23 speeches). This range of contexts and audiences allowed us to grasp the changes and continuities in the rhetorical patterns employed by Bahçeli. By focusing on *nation/Turkish nation* as a keyword, we sought to understand which words were used in relation to this keyword and within which contexts these words were used repeatedly. Our method is based on the predicate analysis developed by Milliken (1999), which uses the “language practices of predication, such as the verbs, adverbs and adjectives that attach to nouns” to understand the object space of the text (1999, pp. 232–233).

The discourse of any political movement may be visible through a variety of texts, including party manifestos, press releases, and other official documents. It is possible to observe a high level of variation among these documents, which target different audiences. In the context of the present study, the NAP is characterized by a leader-oriented paternalistic culture, and political leaders are the most important performers on today’s political scene. We therefore chose to focus on the speeches of Bahçeli, which are known for their oratorical richness.

(The speeches are available on the NAP's website. We list them in the **Appendix** and refer to them in what follows by the numbers given there.)

Taking *nation* as a keyword, we scanned all the documents for this term and tried to find other terms used in conjunction within the same phrase or paragraph. Then we coded these terms using NVIVO qualitative analysis software and formed groups of topics to facilitate our analysis. **Table 1** shows how we conducted the coding process.

Findings

The Turkish Nation/The Nation

The key term *Turkish nation* was used 254 times in 41 speeches by Bahçeli (an average of 6.2 times per speech). *Turkish* emerges as an almost naturally collocating adjective for *nation*. The key term Turkish nation is accompanied or paired with the words *state*, *homeland*, *country*, and *flag*, directly connotated with *nation* or *Turkish nation* in terms of bigrams. These most frequently stated words by Bahçeli play a crucial role in his rhetoric.

The State

The *state* and *the nation/Turkish nation* are the two words most frequently used by Bahçeli (45 times in 23 speeches). Beyond sheer frequency of usage, the idea of the state played a central role in Bahçeli's speeches. First, he presented the state and the nation as organically linked. They exist together and are dependent on each other for their *survival* (another important term used by Bahçeli). They can exist together only in *unity*; their unity cannot be divided, and the NAP exists to defend the *survival* of the *state* and the *nation*. Moreover, these two entities, state and nation, have the same interests. The degree of this existential fusion of the state and the nation is not surprising, considering the strength of the étatist and corporatist tradition in the NAP's conception of nationalism (Kastaryano, 2013). Thus, the claim, contrary to that of the populist parties, is that the establishment is the real owner of the state and the country.

In some of his speeches, Bahçeli recognized a degree of divergence between the state and the nation. He cited a solidarity between the state and the nation (7) against external and internal enemies (19). He also stated that these enemies had triggered a division between the state and the nation, connotated with societal polarization (40).

Despite his fusion of the concepts of the state and the nation, Bahçeli implied a kind of hierarchy between the terms. The survival of the state is dependent on the survival of the nation. "Let the nation live, so that the state lives" (1); the nation accompanies the state, as the "state is not alone, the nation exists and stands for it" (5); and the strength of the state is dependent on the well-being of the nation (19). Thus, the state and the nation coexist, but the nation precedes the state to a degree.

The Homeland

Connected to the concept of the *nation* is the concept of the *homeland*. Bahçeli used these terms in conjunction 48 times in 25 speeches (on average just under twice per speech). As with the relationship between the state and the nation, *homeland* and *nation* are bigrams; these words are used to fulfill the same functions within phrases. They are said to exist in unity (7), which is under threat from its eternal enemies (25) and from people in general. The NAP and the nationalist movement are ready to die for the defense of the homeland and the nation (8, 16, 18, 31). For Bahçeli, the homeland extends beyond the current borders of the Republic of Turkey, as he used the term when he addresses the Olive Branch Operation in Northern Syria (an operation against the YPG, one of the eternal enemies mentioned several times) (8).

In almost every speech, Bahçeli used these terms in conjunction, framing them as the objects of an important emotion: *love*. The love of the nationalist movement for the nation and the homeland exists without any expectation of reward (37, 30, 18). This kind of *platonic* and *self-sacrificing* love is characteristic the NAP and the nationalist movement (9) and is claimed to be the opposite of the ordinary practice of politics (19, 30). This idealization of political performance as love is so clear that, for Bahçeli, the parliament to be constituted after the general elections should be the material formation of the national will, love, and Turkish nationalist feeling for the homeland and the nation (24). A nation without a homeland is not possible.

In the speeches we analyzed, we found only two instances in which Bahçeli differentiated between the homeland and the nation or explained the relationship between them. In one of his earlier speeches, he stated that “the nation owns the homeland” (4). In another speech, he presented the nation and the homeland as facing different threats: “the loss of the homeland” and “the division of the nation” (16).

The Country

Although it is difficult to differentiate what Bahçeli means by *country* and *homeland*, a closer analysis may provide some clues. Bahçeli used the term *the country* 30 times in 19 different speeches as a complement to *nation*. The concepts of the country and the nation form some of the main slogans of the NAP: “First my country and my nation, then my party and myself” is a phrase repeated several times by the leader. This slogan fulfills some of the above-stated functions of the concept of the homeland. According to Bahçeli, individuals and the party (i.e., the NAP) exist to serve and to save “the country and the nation,” and they are dedicated to this eternal mission. Furthermore, the verbalization of this mission puts the country first, before the nation. For Bahçeli, this approach is one of the moral principles of the nationalist movement (19), and it justifies the political decisions of the party (34, 37).

All of the instances we analyzed show that Bahçeli did not separate these words, treating both country and nation as subject to external threats (2) and enemies (22). He character-

ized both as experiencing the same difficult, sorrowful situations and losses (6) and as having the same interests, which are to be advocated by the NAP and the nationalist movement (1).

The Flag

In Bahçeli's rhetoric, the flag is the main symbol of the nation. He used the term in conjunction with the nation 16 times in 14 of his speeches. Unlike other terms he used, the flag and the nation are clearly separate entities, although they are frequently mentioned altogether. The flag symbolizes and indicates the presence of the Turkish nation (16): "If it withers, the nation falls" (32), and the "Turkish nation has never dropped its flag" (38). This existential relationship between the flag and the nation is not unique to the Turks, as, for Bahçeli, "the flag is the symbol of independence of any nation" and there are some requisites for having "a state, a nation and a flag" (38).

Like other terms, the flag and the nation receive the *love* and *loyalty* of the NAP and the nationalist movement (3, 9), who are ready to sacrifice themselves (19) to the extent of becoming martyrs (10, 31). On this basis, Bahçeli asked the following question in many of his speeches: "Are you ready to protect the homeland, the nation and the flag?" (35, 37). The question is rhetorical, but it shows how Bahçeli positioned himself, his party, and his movement as the gatekeeper of the nation.

The Turkish Nation as a Person

Personification (attributing the characteristics of a person to a non-human entity) helps us to comprehend entities in terms of human motivations, characteristics, and activities. It allows us to create a bridge between ourselves and, for example, the nation. We empathically interpret the nation as based on our "motivations, goals, actions and characteristics" (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003, p. 35). From this perspective, the personified Turkish nation acts, thinks, and perceives as human beings do, and it possesses the human characteristics of emotions and agency (Eriksen, 1997).

In Bahçeli's intensive use of the metaphor of the nation as a person, the nation becomes the possessor of several characteristics usually attributed to human beings. These characteristics place the nation in a superior position to other nations and solidify its identity. What follows is a brief summary of these characteristics as used in Bahçeli's rhetoric.

For Bahçeli, the nation possesses honor, which has been attacked by the eternal enemies (5), as observed in the past (29). This honor will be defended by the NAP and the nationalist movement (35), which will justify the emergence of the People's Alliance (34). Independence is the honor of the nation (38) and is built on goodwill and courage (8).

According to Bahçeli, the nation has a spirit and an essence. This spirit is independent and has never been conquered (35); it is observed in the cultural products of the nation, and reference is made in this connection to the well-known historian and politician Fuat Köprülü -one of the founders of the Democratic Party known as the ancestor of the center-right in Turkey-, in 1946- (12). The nation's spirit is defended by the nation itself and by the NAP, and it is embodied in the parliament (3, 24, 30).

As Bahçeli intensively emphasized the honor of the nation, morality was allocated to a specific domain: gender issues. Bahçeli talked about the morality of the nation six times in two different speeches. Five of these instances were in the context of child abuse and marriage (12), and the remaining instance was in the context of sexual harassment (15).

The Survival of the Nation

The history of the nation is both its essence and its *raison d'être*. The nation is a historical entity, and the past victorious history of the Turkish nation reflects its future survival. Our analysis shows that the survival of the nation was a pivotal element in the speeches of Bahçeli, who used the term 68 times in conjunction with the nation in 28 of his speeches. *The nation's survival* was almost a motto, repeated regularly to justify the policies of Bahçeli and the NAP, to the extent that the last congress, held on March 18 (another symbolic date -the victory of the Ottoman Forces in Dardanelles-) was named "*Milli Duruş: Şühedaya Vefa, Millete Beka*" (National Standing: Loyalty to the Martyrs, Survival to the Nation).

In Bahçeli's rhetoric, the survival of the nation is something that goes beyond politics (8), and it is the responsibility of every Turkish national (15). It implies the success of the Turkish nation, and this feeling and target is the very fabric of Turkishness (8, 19). The nation paid for its survival with its blood (14). The survival of the nation is under threat (another concept frequently used by Bahçeli), and its defense is a national responsibility. The nation and its constituent parts should agree on matters relating to its survival, and any disagreement on this matter amounts to a betrayal (10, 21).

According to Bahçeli, the NAP and the nationalist movement are the guardians of the survival of the nation under all circumstances (8, 9, 10, 11, 15, 16, 31), and the party is "the embodiment and the name of national survival" (18). Consequently, as the survival of the nation is the fabric of Turkishness, the NAP is the embodiment of national survival, the bodily form of Turkishness (19). Using this logic, Bahçeli declared the NAP's monopoly on the defense of the nation, which he extended to justify the political actions of the NAP, including its support of the presidential system (22) and the formation of the People's Alliance (37).

The concept of national survival coexists with certain themes. Not surprisingly, the unity of the nation comes first. The survival of the nation is specified as its unity and is possible only through the unity of the Turkish nation specifically (5, 7, 13). Historical events, including the War of Independence, are cited as examples of the nation's unity ensuring its survival (7).

The resistance of July 15 against the Coup Attempt and the fight against the PKK -the Kurdish Workers Party- in Northern Syria are also positioned within this historical frame (7, 33, 37).

Independence, defined as the spirit and honor of a nation, is the second theme; the Turkish nation has never lost its independence (38), and slavery is against its nature (12). The War of Independence is presented as the will of the nation to preserve its independence through unity, and the parliament is the product of this will (24). The NAP and the nationalist movement are committed to protecting the independence of the nation (31), and voting for the People's Alliance in the general elections implies support for this independence (25).

In the third theme in this aspect of Bahçeli's rhetoric, the victorious past of a nation will ensure a brilliant and secure future (19). The Turkish nation is eternal, and the NAP is the guardian of this bright future (31). Bahçeli presented the presidential system and the People's Alliance as the template for and guarantee of a positive future. Thus, the general elections were a turning point in Turkish history (33, 34, 35, 36, 37), and the NAP is to be the glorious future of the nation (40).

Threats to the Nation

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On many occasions, Bahçeli presented the Turkish nation as a victim within a historical framework, such as the War of Independence (32, 39), the Balkan War (37), and other conflicts against the eternal enemies, including the occupation of the Uygur Lands (8). The NAP and the nationalist movement, as the guardians of the nation, have a duty to defend the nation's rights (31, 39).

Bahçeli used this threat frame regularly to evoke a continuous war between good and evil. These threats, some of which we will summarize below, are used to urge the nation to find unity against its enemies, and this forms the basis for supporting the NAP (which is the nation itself). Religion is another means by which the nation presents its support of the eternal fight against terrorists and other enemies (7, 12, 16, 28, 40). The NAP and the nationalist movement are also supported through the praises of the Turkish nation (15).

According to Bahçeli, separatism is the most important threat to the nation. He used this idea 19 times in 13 of his speeches. The unity of the nation is the key to its survival; hence, it is a target for separatist movements (5, 35, 37). The fight against separatists is a historical one, and the Turkish nation has always been victorious. It has maintained its unity (31) and sacrificed the blood of martyrs (3). The NAP and the nationalist movement have a historical mission to fight against separatism (31).

The threat of occupation is among the threats most frequently referred to. This narrative is related to the War of Independence and the sacrifices the nation made to win and maintain its independence (40). In one of his speeches, Bahçeli defined occupation as rape (16).

According to Bahçeli, the Turkish nation is the subject of the conspiracies of its eternal enemies (4, 34). These conspiracies are supported by local collaborators, but the NAP and the nationalist movement know this and are ready to defend the nation (12, 22).

Enemies of the Nation

Scapegoating (finding external or eternal enemies to be responsible for crises) is a common characteristic of populist discourse and has been exploited repeatedly by the government's spokespersons in Turkey (Erçetin & Erdoğan, 2018). Scapegoating is also a recurrent element of Bahçeli's rhetoric. Foreign powers are presented as the eternal enemies that threaten the survival and the unity of the nation. These eternal enemies, seeking revenge for their historical defeats, are trying to revitalize the Treaty of Sèvres -signed after the defeat of the Ottoman Empire after the First World War- with the cooperation of their local collaborators (35, 40). The main opposition party, the RPP -Republican People's Party-, is the pivotal element of the coalition of eternal enemies and has been listed as a traitor along with so-called FETÖ, the USA, the PYD/PYG, the PKK, and the European Union (22).

For Bahçeli, Nation Alliance is an alliance of abjection and illness. He has equated the opposition with an illness that threatens the health of the nation. Abjection (*zillett*) and the nation (*millet*) are two terms used in tandem by Bahçeli to foster his rhetoric at the points where it most closely approaches populist discourse.

In the speeches under study, Bahçeli's direct attacks on elites were infrequent. On one occasion, he directly quoted humiliating adjectives used by some journalists ("assaulting the nation as two-faced, empty-headed, willing to pasta and coal, belly scratchers"). On another occasion, he made use of a Manichean description of society:

On the one side, there are millions of people who are laboring, sweating, and striving for honest earnings, and on the other side there is the minority upper class who sponge on the people, live in misery in terms of conscience and opinions, but live in debauchery in terms of physical conditions in their ivory towers. (9, 16)

The Resistance of the Nation

The resistance of the nation is a pivotal and mythical element in Bahçeli's speeches. The resistance of the Turkish nation recurs throughout history against a succession of enemies. In chronological order, the Turkish nation resisted the Crusaders (28), the 1919 occupation of Anatolia (29, 38), and the putschists of July 15 (16, 30, 32, 36, 38, 40). Bahçeli presented the presidential and general elections as events on the continuum of this historical resistance (30).

The resistance of the nation is presented as a sacrifice of the lives of the martyrs, and the resistance on July 15 is an example of this (3, 5, 14). Bahçeli linked the earliest days of the

Turks in Anatolia to the events of July 15, and even to the June 24 elections, in order to legitimize his party's position during and after the coup. He also emphasized the historical mission given to the NAP and the nationalist movement. For him, the coup attempt was intended to disrupt the harmony between the army and the nation (40). He located the army's roots in the Turkish nation (9) and represented the relationship between them as based on faith, conscience, and awareness (12).

The Will of the Nation

The will of the nation, a commonly used populist theme, is one of Bahçeli's central rhetorical elements, used 80 times in 26 of his speeches. The independence, survival, and resistance of the nation are only possible because of the will of the nation (6, 7, 8, 13). Bahçeli traced another historical line between events in which the will of the nation became crystallized: the resistance to the coup, the Yenikapı meeting after the Coup Attempt, and the referendum of April 16. The forthcoming general elections were another, perhaps the ultimate, expression of the will of the nation (3, 5, 13, 16, 22, 30, 34, 37, 38, 39).

For Bahçeli, the newly established presidential system is the product of the national will as approved in the referendum of April 16. We know that referendums of this kind are promoted by populist movements as better tools of the expression of the popular will, especially compared with the parliamentary system (Collin, 2019). Bahçeli severely criticized the advocates of the restoration of the parliamentary system for supporting the status quo (5, 23) and called on them to show respect for the will of the nation (22).

The People's Alliance of the JDP and the NAP is another expression of the nation's will, as the transition to the presidential system will be completed with the electoral victory of this alliance (25).⁴ However, Bahçeli has also defined this alliance as a product of the reason of the nation. He repeated his slogan, "Cumhur İttifakı, Millet Akıldır" ("The People's Alliance is the nation's rationality") 29 times during the two months of the electoral campaign. The nation is rational, conscientious, and wise; all these virtues attributed to the nation, together with its history, justify the national will.

The Nation and the NAP

As discussed above, the NAP is more than a political party, and Bahçeli has summarized its status by saying that "the NAP is the nation" (6, 19, 33, 37). Nevertheless, this relationship is complex. The NAP is dependent on the nation in a paternalistic sense. The party is the child of the nation (40), it owes its characteristics to the nation (30, 40), and the nation is proud of the party. This terminology implies a parent-child relationship between the nation and the party.

The relationship is close to being reciprocal. According to Bahçeli, the NAP is loyal to the nation (9) and gives it hope as the guardian of its unity and survival (5, 8, 9, 33). The NAP,

therefore, is the last fortress of the nation against internal and external enemies (9, 16). This situation is a historical mission given to the NAP (17), and it is the party's duty to the nation to carry out this mission (11). The NAP has the full support of the nation and is aligned with the nation in the fight against its enemies (3, 6, 10, 18, 22, 30, 33).

Bahçeli has repeatedly defined the relationship between the nation and the party as one of love (3, 6, 10, 17, 18, 19, 21, 30, 31, 37, 40). This love is almost platonic, without any personal expectations (31). In this connection, politics, which is focused on the exchange of material benefits, denotes something negative; only the "real politics" can truly serve the nation and its interests (5, 22). This definition of politics is consistent with the label given to the nationalist movement, *ülküçüler* (idealists).

For Bahçeli, the support of the nation for the NAP is something natural and innate. The relationship between the nation and the party was always bound to end with the victory of the NAP at the ballot box. This confidence about the election results requires further attention. Bahçeli has attacked pollsters and the media on several occasions, accusing them of manipulating the will of the nation and being in the service of foreign powers (30, 32, 33, 39, 40).

Concluding Remarks

Focusing on the speeches of Devlet Bahçeli during the six months before the June 2018 election, we have tried to find evidence of populism in the nationalist discourse of the NAP and to determine how NAP's discourse is different from that of populism, despite its alliance with the JDP. By according a central place in our analysis to the key concept of the Turkish nation, we have gained insight into how the nation has been described, which words have been paired with this key concept, and how the survival and will of the Turkish nation is represented in this usage.

Figure 1 shows the structure of Bahçeli's speeches. For Bahçeli, the nation (i.e., the Turkish nation) is accompanied by four other important entities: the state, the country, the homeland, and the flag. Within Bahçeli's discourse, these entities are complementary to the nation, and it is almost impossible to visualize a nation without them. The nation, personified and accorded values such as honor, morality, spirit, and religion, acts as an autonomous organic entity. In this discourse, it seeks its own survival as the most important value and the ultimate goal of politics. The nation has been threatened by internal and external enemies, and it has been successful in its resistance, for example in the War of Independence, the July 15 coup attempt, and other crises. The survival and the independence of the nation are only possible through the actualization of its will. For Bahçeli, the national will was crystallized in the Yenikapı meeting and in the referendum of April 16, and it would be realized in the general elections. He stated in almost every speech that the People's Alliance of the JDP and the NAP is the embodiment of this national will.

The role attributed to the NAP is critical. First, the NAP is the nation (i.e., the Turkish nation). It stands in a parental relationship with the nation, it is the child of the nation, it loves the nation, and consequently, as a good child, it is the guardian of the nation. Not surprisingly, the NAP has the full support of the nation, and this support would be and has been evident at the ballot box.

The schema in **Figure 1** provides a number of clues about the complex relationship between populism and nationalism. Bahçeli, as the leader and the voice of the NAP, maintained a very strong nationalist tone in his speeches. Emphasis was given to the Turkish nation and its supremacy, matching the nativist dimension of the idealized presentation of the rhetoric of the radical populist right. Although *the nation* is one of three possible meanings included in the concept of *the people* (Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2017), Bahçeli's usage shows that these words are far from identical.

Unlike the word *nation*, which appeared frequently in the speeches, the word *people* appears not to be in Bahçeli's dictionary. Caiani and Della Porta (2011) demonstrated that radical right parties in Germany and Italy use the concept of the people very frequently in their speeches, and De Cleen (2017) and De Cleen and Stavrakakis (2017) have made a similar argument for use of the word by nationalists. Bahçeli's usage indicates that he occupies a very different position, despite the naming of the People's Alliance, and this deserves further attention.

Populism and populist logic are characterized by an antagonistic relationship between the people and the elite. In his speeches, Bahçeli listed many internal and external enemies of the nation (assuming for present purposes that Bahçeli used *the nation* to refer to the people), and there was no mention of the elite among these enemies. When he used the abjection–nation motto to describe the opposition alliance, he was accusing the opposition of humiliating ordinary people. However, this rhetoric was visible only twice during his campaign. For Bahçeli, the elites of Turkey are not among the usual enemies of the nation. This confirms previous findings, discussed above, about the role of elites in the construction of national identity.

The final way, perhaps the most important, in which Bahçeli's rhetoric diverged from the idealized populist discourse can be observed in the concept of the national will. For populists, the general will, as expressed and performed by the populist leader, is the major objective of politics. This popular will is to be translated into politics by the leader, and its objectives are dependent on time and space. In contrast, for Bahçeli, the national will has a clear function, namely to ensure the survival of the nation. The party, its leader, and the entire mechanism of democracy are in the service of this ultimate objective. Compared to the vague definition of the popular will, the national will is much more rigidly defined, and the nationalist movement borrows its *raison d'être* from this will. Bahçeli's speeches may give us more and better examples of the divergence of nationalist and populist discourses, and it is also possible to find phrases that suggest populist tendencies on his part. Nonetheless, even a limited analysis of his rhetoric shows that he and his party are far from being populist, especially when their rhetoric

is compared with that of the other candidates in the presidential elections of 2018, as discussed elsewhere in this special issue (Erdoğan et al., 2018).

From a comparative perspective, as we stated at the beginning of this article, analytical clarity is needed to understand how populism and nationalism work together and how they differ. The growing literature on populism should engage both theoretically and empirically with previous work on nationalism and democracy. Even the findings of this limited single case provide us essential insights concerning the different focus of nationalism with that of populism; being the establishment rather than anti-establishment; the will of the nation being rational and the role of the party guarding the nation and the state.

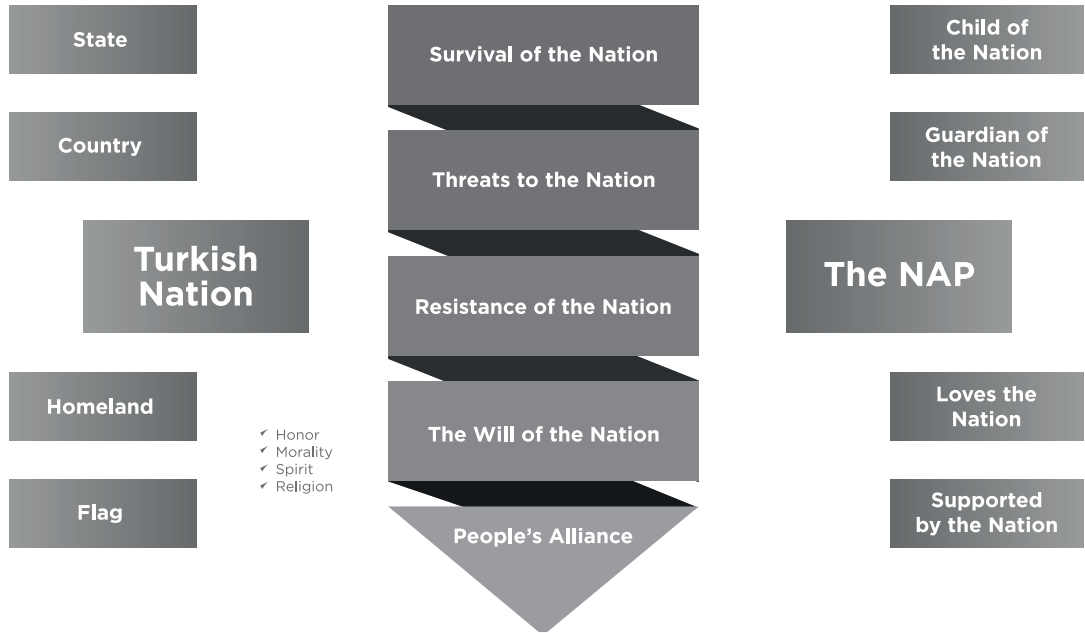
- 1 For the study of the NAP and its historical and ideological formation, see Landau (1982); Bora and Can (1991, 2004); Çınar and Arkan (2002); Arıkan (2003); and Öniş (2010).
- 2 Bonikowski (2017) also examined how identity plays a role in ethnonational populism. Meléndez and Kaltwasser (2017) elaborated on the relationship between populism and political identities, especially anti-establishment political identities.
- 3 For the numbers of meetings, see http://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/haber/turkiye/1006777/Meydanlar_mitinge_doydu_iste_adaylarin_yaptigi_miting_sayisi.html. For detailed analyses of the campaigns, see <http://www.gmfus.org/publications/explaining-turkeys-snap-elections> and Erdoğan, Erçetin, & Thomeczek (2018).
- 4 “Cumhur İttifakı” has been translated as People’s Alliance; <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/akp-mhp-to-press-button-for-peoples-alliance-127628>.

Table 1
Examples of coding

Extract from speech	Translation	Keyword	Date of speech
Her zorluğu aşacak, her engeli yıkacak, her badireyi kapı dışarı edecek büyük Türk milleti melun siyaset sahiplerini tanımaktadır.	The great Turkish nation, who will overcome every challenge, destroy every obstacle, recognizes the owners of damned politics.	Turkish nation	20180105
Duruşumuz dik ve cesurdur, milletimize beka sözümüz vardır.	Our stance is steep and brave, we have a promise of survival to our nation.	Nation’s survival	20180213
Emperyalizmin sınırlarımıza demirlediği, ülkemizle ilgili kirli senaryo ve karanlık planlamalar yaptığı bir dönemde, 24 Haziran’da milletimiz bekasına, beraberliğine, bereket ve kaderine sahip çıkacaktır.	At a time when imperialism is anchored to our borders, and dirty scenarios and dark planning about our country are made, on June 24, our nation will have its survival, solidarity, abundance, and fate.	Nation’s survival Nation’s unity	20180421

Bayrak ise bir milletin bağımsızlık sembolüdür.	The flag is a symbol of independence of a nation.	Nation and flag	20180619
Kahramanlar vatan için, millet için toprağa düşmektedir.	The heroes fall to the ground for the nation and the homeland.	Nation and homeland	20180206
Devletimizin ve milletimizin bekası için her şeyi göze alacağız.	We will take everything for the sake of our state and our nation.	Nation and the state	20180621
“Önce ülkem ve milletim, sonra partim ve ben” anlayışımıza uygun hareket etmeyi görev ve vicdan ödevi sayarız.	We consider duty and conscience to act in accordance with our understanding of “my country and nation first, then my party and me.”	Nation and the country	20180606
Harap ve bitap düşmüş Türk milleti, Samsun’dan itibaren kademe kademe derlendi, aşama aşama toparlandı, nihai olarak tarihi bir mucizeye imza attı.	The ruined and exhausted Turkish nation, gradually gathered from Samsun, gradually recovered, and finally achieved a historic miracle.	Nation’s resistance	20180619
Milli ittifak Türk milletinin karar ve iradesidir; Cumhurbaşkanlığı Hükümet Sistemi Türk milletinin tercih ve takdiridir, meşale yanmış, gelecek hamd olsun aydınlanmıştır.	The National Alliance is the decision and will of the Turkish nation; the Presidential Government System is the preference and discretion of the Turkish nation, the torch is burnt, and the future is praised.	Nation’s will	20180116
Devlet gittikten, millet bölündükten sonra iktidarın ne anlamı kalacaktır?	What is the meaning of power after the state is gone and the nation is divided?	Threats to the nation	20180210
Yerli ve yabancı tüm gayri milli unsurlar, Cumhuriyetimiz ve milletimiz aleyhine yıllardır sakladıkları gizli emelleri açığa vurmak için hazırdadır.	All domestic and foreign informal elements are ready to expose the secret ambitions they have kept for years against our Republic and our nation.	Enemies of the nation	20180623
Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi vatana, millete ve bayrağa eşsiz sevgi, emsalsiz sadakattir.	The Nationalist Movement Party is unique love and unparalleled loyalty to motherland, nation, and flag.	The NAP and the nation (love and loyalty)	20180210

Figure 1
Schematic Presentation of Bahçeli's Themes



Appendix

Speeches and Public Messages by Devlet Bahçeli during the 2018 Election Campaign

No.	Type and context of message	Date
1	Speech at the opening of 1071 commemoration services in Adana	20180105
2	Speech at the National Assembly's Group Meeting	20180109
3	Speech at the opening of Masal Park and Devlet Bahçeli Underpass in Osmaniye	20180114
4	Speech at the National Assembly's Group Meeting	20180116
5	Press conference after the meeting with party deputies, board members and discipline board members	20180121
6	Circular letter to party offices	20180131
7	Speech at the opening of 1923 commemoration projects in Mersin	20180204
8	Speech at the National Assembly's Group Meeting	20180206
9	Speech at the opening of the consultation meeting with provincial and district principals	20180210
10	Speech at the closing of the consultation meeting with provincial and district principals	20180211
11	Speech at the National Assembly's Group Meeting	20180213
12	Speech at the National Assembly's Group Meeting	20180220
13	Speech at the National Assembly's Group Meeting	20180227
14	Press briefing on "Martyries in the Operation Olive Branch"	20180302
15	Speech at the National Assembly's Group Meeting	20180306

16	Speech at the opening of the 12th Regular Congress	20180318
17	Speech at the closing of the 12th Regular Congress	20180318
18	Letter of thanks to party offices after the 12th Regular Congress: “National Stance, Fidelity to Martyries, Survive to the Nation”	20180320
19	Speech at the National Assembly’s Group Meeting	20180327
20	Speech for the 21st anniversary of the death of the chieftain Alparslan Türkeş	20180404
21	Speech at the National Assembly’s Group Meeting	20180410
22	Speech at the National Assembly’s Group Meeting	20180417
23	Press conference after a meeting with party deputies, board members, and provincial principals	20180421
24	Message on April 23 National Sovereignty and Children’s Day	20180422
25	Circular letter to provincial and district principals	20180501
26	Message on “May 3 Nationalists’ Day”	20180503
27	Press conference on “Israel’s savage assaults on Gaza”	20180515
28	Speech at the meeting “Curse to persecution, support to Jerusalem”	20180518
29	Celebration message on May 19, Commemoration of Atatürk, Youth and Sports Day	20180519
30	Speech at a candidate presentation meeting	20180526
31	Speech at the remembrance day of nationalist martyries	20180527
32	Speech at the regional consultation meeting in Sivas	20180606
33	Speech at the regional consultation meeting in Kayseri	20180607
34	Speech at the regional consultation meeting in Bursa	20180609
35	Speech at the regional consultation meeting in İzmir	20180610
36	Celebration message on the Ramadan holiday	20180614
37	Speech at the holiday ceremony organized by the Istanbul Directorate	20180616
38	Speech at the “Çırpınırdı Karadeniz Bakıp Türk’ün Bayrağına” meeting in Samsun	20180619
39	Speech at the “Grand Çukurova” meeting in Adana	20180621
40	Speech at the “Grand Turkey” meeting in Ankara	20180623
41	Speech at party headquarters in Ankara	20180624

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