

ONTOLOGICAL SECURITY APPROACH IN TURKISH NATIONALISM: NATIONALIST MOVEMENT PARTY

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Introduction

In contrast to traditional security approaches, the 21st century necessitates a reevaluation of the concept of security to broaden and deepen its scope. The political, economic, and cultural aspects of globalization have transformed the institutional structures and responses of 20th-century nation-states, aiming to dismantle barriers to inter-societal communication and transportation. This evolution has diversified societal demands, interests, and expectations in domestic politics, thereby placing identity debates at the forefront of political discourse.

The globalization-induced shift in global politics and nation-state structures has broadened the spectrum of security threats and led to diverse perspectives on understanding and addressing these threats, as well as offering various political solutions. Issues such as international migration, global climate crises, environmental challenges, the rise of ethnic conflicts, and the globalization of terrorism underscore that national security is not solely reliant on political borders and cannot be effectively maintained through military means alone. This shift has prompted theoretical debates on nationalism, introducing concepts

such as “green nationalism,” which integrates ecological concerns and moves away from the industrialization-focused political and social dynamics of the 20th century; “banal nationalism,” which permeates everyday life; and the interplay between gender and nationalism.

Turkish nationalism, enriched by a century of the Republic’s experiences and memories, may propose a novel approach for the 21st century and the future vision of the Republic within the context of ontological security. The central question of this study is whether Turkish nationalism, through the lens of ontological security, can offer a fresh perspective for the Republic’s future. This study serves as an introduction to the ontological security approach of Turkish nationalism, aiming to open a new agenda in the literature and reveal the Republic’s 21st-century perspective, particularly through the lens of the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP).

However, Turkish nationalism, reflecting the ideological and institutional achievements of the Republic, must equip itself with the necessary tools and frameworks to prepare the Republic for its new century. It is critical to rationalize and refocus our century-old Republic memory, which has been impaired, suppressed, and sidelined in the realms of politics, economics, law, and diplomacy under the banner of rationalized idealism. This rationalized idealism in Turkish nationalism should guide the interpretation and application of the Republic’s principles in its second century.

At this juncture, the ontological security perspective serves as a set of concepts and a methodology proposed by Turkish nationalism for understanding both the global context and Türkiye’s specific situation. The MHP emerges as a key entity representing and advancing the concept of Turkish nationalism in the political sphere. This study initially introduces the concept of ontological security and then delves into the ontological security approach of Turkish nationalism within the frameworks of the Republic’s regime, national sovereignty, Turkish national identity principles, and the geopolitics of the Turkish world.

Ontological Security Approach

The formation of unique identities, shaped by the collective memory and cultural history of each society, plays a crucial role in imbuing a place with personality and character. This process is framed within

the context of one's original perception of and relationship to the environment. It forges a link between space and the individual concerning belonging, encompassing the concepts of "being here" and "being there." This connection reflects the state of being inside or outside a place, along with the elements it contains and sustains. However, defining one's living space introduces a problematic aspect regarding one's position—where one is and isn't. This leads to an exploration of the authentic self and the "other" through the dichotomy of "insideness" and "outsideness."

The concepts of "insideness" and "outsideness," as defined by Relph, are pivotal in understanding a place's identity. They relate to whether one feels inside or outside a structure. When a person feels inside a space, they experience "insideness": they are here, not there; secure, not in danger; strong, not weak; and they experience peace, tranquility, and belonging, as opposed to the threats, fear, and exclusion associated with "outsideness." "Insideness" is considered in an existential context, representing a profound and conscious connection—a sense of belonging that originates from one's community and region concerning space. It lends ontological significance to the concepts of security, peace, strength, and belonging. Conversely, feelings of alienation and strangeness are embodied in the concept of "outsideness," representing an ontological otherness set against a backdrop of experiential connection and memory.¹

The concepts of "insideness" and "outsideness" construct distance both cognitively and emotionally, as well as ontologically. Distance involves the exploration and interpretation of proximity and remoteness between two focal points or positions within the framework of experiences and accumulated knowledge.² This concept plays a pivotal role in the identity equation, particularly in shaping the sense of belonging. Factors determining these spatial perceptions are deeply intertwined with the vibrancy and transmission of lived experiences within the context of cultural dynamism.

¹ David Seamon and Jacob Sowers, "Place and Placelessness, Edward Relph", Ed. P. Hubbard, R. Kitchen, G. Vallentine, *Human Geography*. London: Sage, 2008, pp. 44-46.

² Martin Heidegger, *Varlık ve Zaman (İkinci Baskı)*. Çev. (Kaan H. Ökten). İstanbul: Agora Kitaplığı, p. 107.

In everyday life, spaces where the tools of cultural dynamism are actively engaged are often perceived as “close” spaces, characterized by immediate and tangible cultural interactions. In contrast, “distant” spaces are typically anchored in specific timeframes, often associated with the origins of cultural elements, rich in myths, symbols, and mythological sources. These spaces are perceived as milestones or foundational points in the collective consciousness of a community. The distinctiveness of these places emerges from the intricate interplay and integration of social relationships, experiences, and historical accumulations over time. This dynamic occurs in both distant and close spaces, shaping how individuals and groups interact and form connections.³ Therefore, belonging to a place manifests the subject within that space or the possession of a physical presence.⁴ This principle involves understanding space, an ontological counterpart to existence, encompassing processes such as transforming, familiarizing, and ultimately taking ownership of it. In the transformation of space into a sense of place, the concept of “havali” simultaneously involves being inside a place (in, inna), being its inhabitant (habitare), and being its owner (ich bin).⁵

The concept of belonging in relation to space significantly influences the biographical narratives of societies over time. Such narratives provide a coherent, stable, and complementary sense of belonging, shaped either directly or indirectly by memory.⁶ This sense of belonging is rooted in the interplay between the actor and their actions within a given space.

This perspective has shifted the focus in security studies to examine the biographical narratives of societies and the relationships between actors and their actions, leading to comprehensive inquiries about whose security is being considered. In this framework, the emphasis is not solely on identifying the subject but also on providing meaningful

³ Colin Flint and Peter J. Taylor, *Siyasi Coğrafya, Dünya Ekonomisi, Ulus Devlet ve Yerellik* (6. Baskı), Çev. F. Ereker, Ankara: Nobel Yayıncılık, 2014, p. 271.

⁴ Heidegger, *ibid.*, p. 113.

⁵ William McNeill, “Yurdun ve Yurtsuzluğun Anlamı”, (Çev. A. Aydoğan). Ed. M. Heidegger, W. McNeill ve K. Hammermeister, *Düşünceye Çağırın Yurt Müdafaası*. İstanbul: Say Yayınları, 2010, pp. 55-56.

⁶ Anthony Giddens, *Modernite ve bireysel kimlik geç modern çağda benlik ve toplum* (2nd ed., Ü. Tatlıcan, Trans.), İstanbul: Say Yayınları, 2014, p. 75.

and coherent explanations of how, why, and by what means security should be maintained. These explanations in the biographical narrative are not merely based on a fixed set of factual information regarding the subject's actions; rather, they create a dynamic framework that can be adapted and reshaped, projecting from past experiences to future possibilities.

Defining "whose security" is crucial for identifying the "other" – the entity for whom security is being established – and for determining the security of a specific "space/geography." This process is instrumental in addressing and healing the anxious responses triggered by damaged or fragmented memory within societal consciousness. It aims to resolve divided or fragmented identities and offers a strategy for establishing a sustainable and predictable actor-action relationship, all within the realm of the ontological security concept.⁷

The concept, as articulated by Anthony Giddens, centers on the individual's search for identity and self, with biographical narratives emerging from these pursuits. These narratives are shaped by a quest for coherence within memory, forming a trajectory of action oriented toward the future.⁸ In cases where the actor-action relationship is clearly defined and resolved, explicit answers are provided to key elements of ontological security, such as whose security is being ensured, why it is necessary, and how it is established. These responses are not grounded in fixed or temporal constants; rather, they are fluid, adaptable, and continuously shaped by a dynamic interplay of identity, threat, and reflex.⁹

The concept of ontological security institutionalizes the biographical narrative formed within the identity-space-memory framework into the state's institutional memory and actions. The state constructs its biographical narrative based on its historical imagination, geographical perception, and ideological or doctrinal foundations.¹⁰ In turn, it establishes a national identity, political structure, and objectives that

⁷ Catarina Kinnvall, "Globalization and religious nationalism: self, identity, and the search for ontological security", *Political Psychology*. 25 (5), 2004, p. 746.

⁸ Giddens, *ibid.*, p. 75.

⁹ Kinnvall, *ibid.*, p. 745.

¹⁰ Ayşe Zarakol, "States and ontological security: A historical rethinking", *Cooperation and Conflict*. 52 (1), 2016, pp. 2-3.

align with this narrative. However, in the decision-making processes of security policies, the broader components of ontological security – which reinforce national morale and legitimize state actions through historical and societal tools – highlight the intersection between ontological security and nationalism. Nationalism serves as the conceptual foundation that enriches the state’s approach to ontological security. It underpins national interests and ideals, facilitating their acceptance within society. Furthermore, nationalism acts as a powerful tool for mass mobilization. By systematically conveying information about the “other” to society and addressing perceived threats from this “other,” the frameworks of nationalism align ontological security policies with the state’s future outlook. Thus, nationalism becomes central to the state’s ideological framework, influencing everything from institutional structures to policy formulation and decision-making, either overtly or implicitly.

Nationalism operates across a broad spectrum, manifesting in various nuances and degrees, from the design of institutional structures to policy formulation and decision-making. It interacts with all facets of ontological security, acting as the protector of the political regime, the sustainer of institutional frameworks, the guardian of national interests, and the architect of national identity and purpose. Nationalism ensures the dissemination and reinforcement of these elements within the societal base, anchoring the state’s legitimacy and continuity.¹¹

Principles of Turkish Ontological Security: Republican Achievements and the Eternal State

The foundational principle of the Turkish ontological security approach is rooted in the Republican regime. This regime, emerging as a culmination of modern statehood and solidified by the 1908 Constitutional Revolution, serves as the cornerstone of modern Türkiye. It embodies the national consciousness of a people who express common values through national sovereignty, where sovereign rights are vest-

¹¹ Mustafa Onur Tetik, “Zeytindalı operasyonu ve ontolojik güvenlik”, Ed. M. Akif Okur, *Güvenlik, kargaşa ve belirsizlik çağında nereye?* İstanbul: Kocav Yayınları, 2018; Jelena Subotic, “Narrative, ontological security, and foreign policy change”, *Foreign Policy Analysis*. 12 (4), 2016.

ed in the nation's citizens. National sovereignty, in turn, strengthens the sense of belonging to a shared destiny, common geography, and the pursuit of collective ideals and aspirations. Thus, the exercise of sovereignty by the nation's people reflects a will that disseminates the national narrative to the societal base, reinforcing ties of belonging to the state and nurturing a sense of participation in governance.

Due to its geographical position, Türkiye stands at a crossroads, deeply influenced by political and social changes in its region. Consequently, both Eastern and Western political cultures have left an indelible mark on Turkish thought and politics, reflecting various ideological orientations. This dynamic has triggered cultural and value-centric fault lines, leading to political disturbances that often revolve around regime and system debates. From the early years of the Republic, with events such as the Şeyh Sait Rebellion (1925), the Menemen Incident (1930), and the Tunceli Rebellion (1937), to the rise of Third World socialist organizations between the 1960s and 1980s, and the emergence of ethnic, fundamentalist, and religiously or culturally motivated terrorist organizations (such as the PKK/PYD/YPG, ISIS, FETÖ) in the following decades, these developments have been perceived as threats to the Republican regime and the nation-state framework it established. Additionally, military coups that disrupted democratic and civil politics while limiting the space for civil society have functioned as mechanisms of guardianship, further fueling debates over the regime and system. These issues have contributed to discussions that undermine the institutions and achievements of the Republic.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the rise of left-liberal and Second Republican ideologies, which emphasized collective rights based on ethnicity and sect rather than individual freedoms, confronted the established order of the Republic with demands for multiculturalism and political autonomy. This challenged Türkiye's national sovereignty, which is integral to the Republic's regime, and led to a fragmentation of the actor-action relationship, separating the nation's people from their collective will. As a result, this environment produced schizophrenic identities, disconnecting the nation's subjects from their sovereign will. In this climate, the political goals of pragmatic/liberal Islamists, seeking integration into the capitalist system, aligned with left-liberal currents.

For over half a century, the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) has represented nationalism in the political arena. The MHP's mission of nationalism reflects the principles of republicanism and national sovereignty, which are fundamental to Turkish ontological security. In this regard, the MHP adopts a political approach that maintains and strengthens the strong bond between the people and national sovereignty, placing the preservation, internalization, and transmission of Turkish national identity to future generations at the center of its politics. Therefore, the concept of Turkishness is a foundational element in the MHP's ontological security approach, sustaining the Republic and its national sovereignty.

The primary question that arises here is how the MHP defines Turkish identity. Since the founding of the Republic of Türkiye, Turkishness has been conceptualized on a voluntary basis, rather than being defined by innate characteristics. This framework forms the ontological foundation of national sovereignty within the context of a nation-state and a unitary structure. The voluntary aspect of Turkishness is legally and politically inclusive, as articulated in Article 88 of the 1924 Constitution, which states, "*All inhabitants of Türkiye, regardless of religion and race, are considered Turkish in terms of citizenship,*" and further reinforced by Article 53 of the 1960 Constitution and Article 66 of the 1982 Constitution, which declare, "*Everyone bound to the Turkish state through the bond of citizenship is a Turk.*"¹²

The sociological framework of Turkish identity, as defined through citizenship, is further enriched by language and culture. The MHP, while adhering to the state's official definition of identity, promotes an inclusive and unifying interpretation of Turkishness, rooted in historical and cultural memory rather than ethnicity. In keeping with the spirit and legal structure of the Republic, the nation is not defined by lineage or ethnic origin, but rather by individuals who, regardless of their ethnic background, align themselves with the Turkish state, culture, and values. These individuals, having developed a shared memory and a common sense of destiny, are recognized as part of a collective solidarity.

¹² Kili ve Gözübüyük, *Türk Anayasa Metinler: Sened-i İttifak'tan Günümüze*. İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Yayınları, 1985, ss. 128, 186.

In essence, consistent with the nation-state ideology, anyone who does not harbor allegiance to another nation and who identifies as Turkish, speaking and thinking in Turkish, is considered Turkish.¹³ Thus, the MHP's definition of Turkishness rejects sectarianism, racism, and regionalism, favoring instead a national consciousness and cultural unity.¹⁴ However, Ideological systems that promote competition among social classes are viewed as separatist and divisive, as they are believed to threaten the integrity of the nation.¹⁵ MHP Chairman Dr. Devlet Bahçeli encapsulates this inclusive vision of Turkish national identity, which incorporates the voluntary framework of citizenship and the sociological foundations of Turkishness, stating: "*The Turkish nation is a magnificent human entity that shares a common history, language, religion, tradition, and customs, having reached a consensus over centuries, coming together in both joy and sorrow.*"¹⁶

In the context of defining Turkish identity, the second critical issue is the preservation of this identity in line with the national biographical narrative. The MHP, while avoiding exclusionary and divisive rhetoric in conceptualizing national identity, seeks to identify key milestones in the Turkish biographical narrative to construct and sustain the Turkish existence. Chairman Dr. Devlet Bahçeli's statement, "*In the precious existence of our nation, the values of nationality, ethics, and civilization are exactly as our ancestors planted them, evident even in the Orkhon Inscriptions located right in front of our party,*" encapsulates the essence of the MHP's approach to Turkish ontological security.¹⁷

This approach is rooted in identifying the key memory stations of Turkish existence, drawing from a historical perspective that spans the entirety of Turkish history and is driven by the ambition to shape Türkiye's future. Fragmenting Turkish history into distinct periods and dividing national memory accordingly risks the emergence of multi-

¹³ Alparslan Türkeş, 9 Işık. İstanbul: Kamer Yayınları, 1997, s. 108.

¹⁴ Alparslan Türkeş, Gönül Seferberliğine. İstanbul: Hamle Yayınları, 1996, s. 82.

¹⁵ Türkeş, 9 Işık, ss. 92-93.

¹⁶ Devlet Bahçeli, Siyaset ve Liderlik Okulu 10. Dönem Sertifika/Mezuniyet Töreni, https://www.mhp.org.tr/usr_img/mhpweb/kitaplar/siyasetveliderlik_okulu_genelbaskankonusmalari_opt.pdf, (Accessed on 28.09.2023)

¹⁷ Devlet Bahçeli, Siyaset ve Liderlik Okulu 10. Dönem Sertifika/Mezuniyet Töreni, https://www.mhp.org.tr/usr_img/mhpweb/kitaplar/siyasetveliderlik_okulu_genelbaskankonusmalari_opt.pdf, (Accessed on 28.09.2023)

ple identities from the same biographical narrative. Such segmentation could result in the development of schizophrenic identities within the Turkish collective memory, posing a threat to Turkish social cohesion and the continuity of national identity. MHP Chairman Devlet Bahçeli opposes this fragmentation of identity and the artificial competition imposed by recent historical figures, advocating instead for an inclusive and comprehensive biographical memory. His declaration, “*The Ottoman Empire is ours, the Republic of Türkiye is ours,*” reflects his stance against these divisive tendencies.¹⁸ Additionally, Dr. Bahçeli addresses the threat of fragmentation in Turkish collective memory by acknowledging the importance of key historical figures. He states:

“*With respect and remembrance, Sultan Abdülhamid Khan, whom we remember with mercy, is ours; Talat Pasha is ours; Enver Pasha is ours; Mustafa Kemal Pasha is ours. It is shameless, ignorant, and hypocritical for those who do not belong to our history to come forward today and claim expertise on so-called genocide.*”¹⁹

The preservation of Turkish existence is realized within the framework of Turkishness, national sovereignty, and the Republic, all of which are framed within the context of the state entity. Consequently, in the political discourse of the MHP, the concepts of “the eternal state” and “the Republic forever” have become intertwined and inseparable. From this perspective, threats to national sovereignty are interpreted as threats to the republican regime, and threats to the republic are regarded as threats to the state itself. Devlet Bahçeli succinctly articulated this viewpoint by stating, “*The political history of Türkiye, from its very inception, is a history marked by rebellions and uprisings against the Republic; and since the advent of multi-party politics, it has been a history of impositions, inducements, and pressures against our democracy.*”²⁰

¹⁸ Devlet Bahçeli, Cumhuriyet, Demokrasi ve İstikrar Cilt 2, https://www.mhp.org.tr/usr_img/mhpweb/kitaplar/cumhuriyet_demokrasi_ve-istikrar_cilt2.pdf, (Accessed on 04.10.2023).

¹⁹ Devlet Bahçeli, Cumhuriyet, Demokrasi ve İstikrar Cilt 2, https://www.mhp.org.tr/usr_img/mhpweb/kitaplar/cumhuriyet_demokrasi_ve-istikrar_cilt2.pdf, (Accessed on 04.10.2023).

²⁰ Devlet Bahçeli, Cumhuriyet, Demokrasi ve İstikrar Cilt 1, https://www.mhp.org.tr/usr_img/mhpweb/kitaplar/cumhuriyet_demokrasi_veistikrar_cilt1.pdf, (Accessed on 28.09.2023).

The foundation of Turkish nationalism's ontological security, rooted in the principles of identity, republic, and sovereignty, also necessitates democracy within the MHP's political philosophy. *Democracy* encompasses the entirety of the will that institutionalizes itself alongside national sovereignty, emphasizing human rights and freedoms. In this context, MHP Chairman Dr. Devlet Bahçeli's formula – "the subject is the individual, the object is the state, the predicate is democracy, and the sentence is the nation" – provides a forward-looking perspective on the future of Turkey and clearly defines the essence of Turkish ontological security as follows:

*"We, by placing the individual at the center, have embarked on a journey for the sake of the individual, viewing the state as one with the nation, aiming to establish human-nation, human-state, and nation-state relations through democracy, and believing that all of these will only find meaning within the nation. We are a political movement that stands firmly by the side of its nation against those who threaten it, harm individuals and society, and subject our national and spiritual values to debate. The MHP, in the face of the impositions of those who consider themselves above the nation, has always taken its place firmly by the side of its people. When dangers arose against the integrity of the state and its fundamental values, it demonstrated to both friends and foes how the Republic should be protected."*²¹

This principle also signifies the projection of a political approach that reconciles the often-perceived contradictions between tradition and modernity, past and future, and the individual and the state, harmonizing them instead.²² Consequently, today's achievements of the Republic are regarded as the complete and true embodiment of the collective memory of Turkish society. The preservation of the republican regime is viewed as a formidable bastion in the cultural and civilizational struggle of Turkish society.

²¹ Devlet Bahçeli, *Cumhuriyet, Demokrasi ve İstikrar Cilt 1*, https://www.mhp.org.tr/usr_img/mhpweb/kitaplar/cumhuriyet_demokrasi_veistikrar_cilt1.pdf, (Accessed on 28.09.2023)

²² Devlet Bahçeli, *21. Yüzyıl ve 2023 Türkiye Vizyonu* https://www.mhp.org.tr/usr_img/mhp2007/kitaplar/21yy2023turkiyevizyonu.pdf, (Accessed on 28.09.2023)

“The Nationalist Movement is the epitome of a significant political and intellectual movement that transforms the fundamental values and historical achievements of the Turkish Nation into the driving force for new breakthroughs, ensuring its perpetual existence. This name and this mission will endure as long as the world exists.”²³

This ideology draws from the historical connection and continuity between Bilge Kağan’s declaration, *“Until the blue sky above collapses and the black earth below splits, O Turkish Nation, who can destroy your traditions and rituals?”²⁴* and Mustafa Kemal Atatürk’s statement, *“My mortal body will one day turn to dust. However, the Republic of Türkiye will stand eternal.”* In this context, the existence of a state—rooted in geographical and historical experience—is an indispensable condition for the Turkish nation to thrive in an organized, structured, and secure manner. The republic, established through democracy and national sovereignty, has become the assurance of the future. Therefore, maintaining vigilance against both internal and external threats to the Turkish state and taking appropriate measures to address these threats is considered a matter of paramount importance.²⁵

The Boundaries of Turkish Ontological Security: Turkish Geopolitics and the Worldwide Turkic Community

The core and tangible manifestation of the ontological security approach in Turkish nationalism is embodied in the concept of Turkish Unity. During the Cold War, the application of the “self-determination” principle for Turks under Soviet rule underscored the importance of Turkistanis determining their own political fate. The liberation of the Turkistan region, deemed vital for Turkish survival and unity, became a central tenet of Turkish nationalism. Consequently, the ideology of Turanism, which had previously been perceived as a criminal and detrimental notion in Turkish public opinion, gained acceptance within the MHP. This shift in perception was attributed to the influ-

²³ Devlet Bahçeli, *Siyaset ve Liderlik Okulu 10. Dönem Sertifika/Mezuniyet Töreni*, https://www.mhp.org.tr/usr/img/mhpweb/kitaplar/siyasetveliderlik_okulu_genelbaskankonusmalari_opt.pdf, (Accessed on 28.09.2023).

²⁴ Muharrem Ergin, *Orhun Abideleri (Kırkdokuzuncu Baskı)*, İstanbul: Boğaziçi Yayınları, 2003.

²⁵ Dündar Taşer, *Mesele*, Ankara: Töre-Devlet Yayınları, 1975, s. 330.

ence of communist ideologies, which were seen as the primary sources of the negative views on Turanism.²⁶ Alparslan Türkeş, the founding leader (Başbuğ) of the MHP, articulated this perspective:

“What Enosis signifies for the Greeks, Pan-Slavism for the Russians, German Unity for the Germans, and Arab Unity for the Arabs, Turanism embodies for the Turks. Why is the concept of unifying people of the same nation – an idea that is neither deemed guilty nor flawed for the Russians, Germans, and Arabs in their quest to liberate themselves from subjugation and establish a cohesive entity within a framework of close cultural and cooperative unity – portrayed negatively? Why is it represented to the Turkish public as if it constitutes a criminal act? The instigators of this misrepresentation are the propaganda agents of foreign oppressive regimes that have infiltrated our ranks, with communists leading the charge.”²⁷

Alparslan Türkeş regarded the fate of Turks living outside Türkiye as an integral component of the nation’s destiny and defined Turkish Unity as the unification of all Turks worldwide into a single nation and state under one flag.²⁸ In his vision for achieving Turkish Unity, he emphasized the importance of protecting the rights of Turks under Soviet hegemony, who were deprived of basic human rights, through widespread dissemination of information and propaganda. He advocated for the use of diplomatic means to provide assistance to these oppressed Turks. Türkeş also underscored the necessity of establishing cultural connections with the Turkic world to strengthen ties and relationships swiftly. Furthermore, he highlighted the importance of addressing the needs of refugees and migrants from these captive Turkish regions, ensuring that their requirements are comprehensively met.²⁹

In the declaration titled “21st Century and the 2023 Vision of Türkiye,” MHP Chairman Devlet Bahçeli underscored the historical responsibility and political mission of the MHP, asserting, “MHP is the hope of the world Turks, the future of the Turkish-Islamic world.”³⁰ In this decla-

²⁶ Türkeş, 9 Işık, s. 106.

²⁷ Türkeş, 9 Işık, s. 107.

²⁸ Türkeş, Gönül Seferberliğine, s. 20.

²⁹ Türkeş, Gönül Seferberliğine, s. 21.

³⁰ Devlet Bahçeli, 21. Yüzyıl ve 2023 Türkiye Vizyonu https://www.mhp.org.tr/uzrimg/_mhp2007/kitaplar/21yy2023turkiyevizyonu.pdf, (Accessed on 28.09.2023).

ration, he positioned Türkiye at the forefront of global politics. During a speech on November 23, 1997, Dr. Bahçeli elaborated on Türkiye's vision for 2023, emphasizing its goal of becoming a regional leader and integrating with the Turkic world:

"Why shouldn't Türkiye enter the year 2023, the centennial of our Republic's establishment, as a leading country, and the year 2053, marking the 600th anniversary of Istanbul's conquest by Fatih Sultan Mehmet, as a 'superpower'? Why shouldn't Türkiye assume a leading role in economic, political, and military organizations that it will establish with the Turkic Republics, in addition to the Black Sea Economic Cooperation?"³¹

The vision articulated in 1997 delineated the contours of Turkish ontological security for the centennial of the Republic, with a particular focus on Turkish geopolitics. This vision was further institutionalized with the establishment of the "Cooperation Council of Turkic Speaking States" in 1992, following the Cold War, and the signing of the Nahçıvan Agreement on October 3, 2009. The 8th Summit in Istanbul on November 12, 2021, marked a significant milestone, as the Turkic Council was rebranded as the "Organization of Turkic States." Uzbekistan joined as a full member during the 7th Summit in Baku in October 2019, while Hungary attained observer status at the 6th Summit in Cholpon-Ata, Kyrgyzstan, in September 2018. Turkmenistan followed suit during the 8th Summit in Istanbul in November 2021, and the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus joined at the 9th Summit in Samarkand.³²

The Organization of Turkic States has opened a gateway to the Turkic world in the new century, acting as a political and institutional manifestation of Turkish geopolitics. In addition to its singular, Western-centric foreign policy perspective, Türkiye's interpretation of regional and Turkic world events through a Turkish lens and in the Turkish language solidifies the foundation of the memory-place-identity composition within the Turkish biographical narrative. These developments undeniably reflect the MHP's political coordinates concerning Türkiye and the Turkic world.

³¹ Devlet Bahçeli, 21. Yüzyıl ve 2023 Türkiye Vizyonu https://www.mhp.org.tr/usr_img/mhp2007/kitaplar/21yy2023turkiyevizyonu.pdf, (Accessed on 28.09.2023).

³² <https://www.turkicstates.org/tr/turk-konseyi-hakkinda>, (Accessed: 28.09.2023).

MHP Leader Dr. Devlet Bahçeli (2009: 14) has made it clear that “*the salvation recipes offered by other capitals will not advance the Turkish nation even a step further. The only solution lies in viewing the world from a Türkiye-centric perspective and reading the future and globalization in Turkish.*”³³ In this assertion, he outlines the principles of Turkish geopolitics and defines its scope as follows:

*“For centuries, this consciousness has been embedded in the minds of teachers, mentors, and scholars, forming the core of the world state. If we aim to seek salvation for humanity, propose a pathway for the Turkish nation and oppressed communities across various fields – such as politics, culture, economy, technology, art, and sports – essentially, in all aspects vital for civilization – and represent solutions in each area, it will be possible only through the preservation of conscious Idealism and the nurturing of conscious Idealists. This political understanding represents a new approach that aims to rescue not only Türkiye but also our kin, our brothers in faith, and the oppressed nations awaiting assistance.”*³⁴

In the ontological security framework of Turkish nationalism, Türkiye is positioned as the central and leading nation, formulating a Turkish geopolitics that encompasses its immediate vicinity, including the Balkans, Turkmeneli, Cyprus, Crimea, Azerbaijan, and other Turkic States. This geopolitical approach is underpinned by a global vision. Indeed, the boundaries of Turkish ontological security are derived from the Turkish biographical narrative, which spans from nearby geographies to distant regions. This vision was articulated by MHP Leader Dr. Devlet Bahçeli in the following manner:

“From Karabakh to Crimea, from Kashgar to Kirkuk, from Cyprus to Jerusalem, from Kashmir to all Turkish and Islamic lands, there are memories of the three crescents, footprints, lingering pains, an indelible name and fame... Therefore, the streams will merge with

³³ Devlet Bahçeli, Siyaset ve Liderlik Okulu 10. Dönem Sertifika/Mezuniyet Töreni, https://www.mhp.org.tr/usr/img/mhpweb/kitaplar/siyasetveliderlik_okulu_genelbaskankonusmalari_opt.pdf, (Accessed on 28.09.2023).

³⁴ Devlet Bahçeli, Siyaset ve Liderlik Okulu 10. Dönem Sertifika/Mezuniyet Töreni, https://www.mhp.org.tr/usr/img/mhpweb/kitaplar/siyasetveliderlik_okulu_genelbaskankonusmalari_opt.pdf, (Accessed on 28.09.2023); Devlet Bahçeli, Ülke ve Şuur, https://www.mhp.org.tr/htmldocs/medya/mhp_yayinlari/mhp_yayinlar.html, (Accessed on 28.09.2023).

rivers, the rivers will meet with seas, and finally, the waters of the Orhun River will merge with the Turkish ocean. The noble members of our nation living in different geographies will, with the memories of Lake Issyk, the inspiration of Ergenekon, and the historical memories of Turkistan, bring stability, peace, prosperity, and justice to the rest of the world, serving as a role model in terms of welfare and justice.”³⁵

The MHP’s stance on Turkish geopolitics and its ties with the Turkic world is grounded in a balanced and realistic political framework, avoiding irredentist or revisionist ambitions. Within the ontological security paradigm, this approach seeks to bridge the gaps in the Turkish biographical narrative and establish a solid foundation for future projections. This reflects a desire to enhance political, diplomatic, and military capabilities based on that foundation. A prime example is Azerbaijan’s military success in the Second Nagorno-Karabakh War, which was supported by Türkiye’s military, technical, and diplomatic assistance, without compromising the international obligations of the member states.

This strategy extends beyond intergovernmental interactions, fostering deeper connections among Turkic peoples and potentially elevating public diplomacy to a powerful tool among Turkic nations. The pragmatic essence of Turkish geopolitics is further elucidated by MHP Leader Dr. Devlet Bahçeli, who reflects on the 2040 vision of the Turkic States Organization as follows:

“The vision based on four main principles promises to strengthen each member state on a national basis and as a group without violating their existing international commitments.”³⁶

This principle fundamentally underpins a paradigm centered on the Turkish axis in Turkish foreign policy. However, the projection of Turkish geopolitics in foreign policy is oriented toward a Turkish axis that encompasses the Turkic world. Thus, integrating the principle of “unity in will”³⁷ with the existing motto of “unity in language, unity in

³⁵ Devlet Bahçeli, Cumhuriyet, Demokrasi ve İstikrar Cilt 1., https://www.mhp.org.tr/usr_img/mhpweb/kitaplar/cumhuriyet_demokrasi_veistikrar_cilt1.pdf, (Accessed: 28.09.2023).

³⁶ Devlet Bahçeli, Adım Adım 2023, https://www.mhp.org.tr/usr_img/mhpweb/kitaplar/adim_adim_2023.pdf, (Accessed on 04.10.2023).

³⁷ Devlet Bahçeli, Adım Adım 2023, https://www.mhp.org.tr/usr_img/mhpweb/kitaplar/adim_adim_2023.pdf, (Accessed on 04.10.2023).

action, and unity in thought” within Turkish geopolitics will establish coherence and harmony in the actor/action dynamic of the Turkish biographical narrative. This approach aims to bridge memory gaps among Turkish peoples and align their thoughts and wills.

In the ontological security perspective of Turkish nationalism, the concept of the “other” is defined by a dichotomy of “secure other” versus “insecure other.” In this framework, Türkiye’s sovereignty rights serve as the fundamental reference point. Consequently, the political stance of the United States and Western countries – particularly regarding terrorist organizations (DAESH, FETÖ, PKK/PYD/YPG,) that threaten both Türkiye’s territorial integrity and regime security, as well as the claims of rights and territory made by Armenian and Greek diasporas – will be crucial in determining whether the “other” is perceived as secure or insecure. MHP Leader Dr. Devlet Bahçeli encapsulated this viewpoint, stating, “*If there is an honorable membership based on respect for sovereignty rights and mutual interests, that’s great. If not, the world is not limited to the EU or the US.*”³⁸

Conclusion

The Republic of Türkiye is esteemed as a national state, symbolizing the modern incarnation of the exalted state spirit. This embodiment marks the hallmark of the 20th century and serves as a legacy for the 21st century, arising from the nationalist will that established the Republic. Mustafa Kemal Atatürk’s conception of Turkishness, alongside his historical and geographical vision, was founded on principles that resonated with the realities of his era while also charting a course for the future of the Turkish nation. In this context, the MHP serves as both the bearer and follower of these principles in the Republic’s second century, infusing Turkish politics with an ontological security perspective. The nationalist flame burning within our political landscape will undoubtedly illuminate our historical and cultural geography through this vision.

Surpassing the static and stagnant debates prevalent in Turkish politics, the key to interpreting regional and global dynamics lies in the innovative proposal encapsulating the ontological security approach

³⁸ Devlet Bahçeli, Adım Adım 2023, https://www.mhp.org.tr/usr_img/mhpweb/kitaplar/adim_adim_2023.pdf, (Accessed on 04.10.2023).

of Turkish nationalism. In this framework, the republican regime and its achievements are fundamental to Turkish ontological security, fostering a vision of a robust and cohesive society. The republican model, shaped by its unique historical and sociological dynamics, is poised to inspire not only neighboring countries but also the Turkic Republics of Turkistan. Within this model, emerging democracy, national sovereignty, and institutional memory serve as the most potent tools for forging close ties between Turkic states and peoples, as well as for establishing a shared destiny and will.

To achieve a position where Turkishness can once again guide, shape, and influence global politics, the MHP's political vision is founded on a model that transcends national or regional confines, embracing a global perspective. The first element of this vision involves fostering a strong and prosperous Türkiye, committed to democratic politics and culture while steadfastly upholding the principle of national sovereignty. The second element emphasizes Turkish Unity, which entails the political, economic, social, legal, military, and cultural amalgamation of independent Turkic states, thereby crafting a Turkish geopolitics capable of interpreting and influencing global politics. The third element focuses on establishing a strong integration with the Turkic world and a political commitment to promoting justice and peace in global affairs, particularly in Islamic countries and other regions.

The ontological security approach of Turkish nationalism introduces a fresh perspective regarding the internal and external dimensions of national identity. This perspective leans toward "*idealism realized through realism*," marking a transition from intention to will and from thought to action. Consequently, it is anticipated that the concepts of nationalism and ontological security will evolve and deepen in the future, thereby enriching the discourse on Turkish nationalism.

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