

The Wolf and the Fist: The Nationalist Action Party (MHP) and the Gezi Protests

Coşkun Taştan

Department of Sociology, Ağrı İbrahim Çeçen University, Ağrı, Turkey

Hatem Ete

Senior Advisor to the Prime Minister, Ankara, Turkey

In the last week of May 2013, a series of mass demonstrations began in Taksim Square, Istanbul, and quickly spread all over Turkey. The demonstrations were initiated by a group declaring their opposition to the removal of some trees as part of an urban modernization project in the city centre. A severe security intervention triggered massive reactions from residents of Istanbul and, later, other Turkish cities: shortly after this intervention, an estimated 2.5 million people joined the demonstrations nationwide. Sustained in its most active form for nearly a month, the demonstrations left behind several deaths, many injuries, and inestimable property damage. Known as the “Gezi events,” they had a tsunami effect on Turkish politics, reshaping the political networks, redesigning ideological positions, and disorganizing the political agenda. This article focuses on the politics of Gezi protests in relation to the Nationalist Action Party (Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi, MHP), one of three opposition parties in the Turkish Grand National Assembly. Founded more than 50 years ago, the MHP is known for its far-right nationalist views. Unlike the main opposition party, the Republican People’s Party (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi, CHP), the MHP did not exploit the Gezi protests against the ruling Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, AKP). The authors analyze the MHP’s discourses and actions regarding the Gezi protests and conclude that, more than ever, the Kurdish question is the key battleground for the MHP, and that since the 1990s the MHP has successfully transformed nationalist reactions to the Kurdish question into political fuel.

Keywords: Gezi protests of 2013, Nationalist Action Party (MHP), Turkey

Durant la dernière semaine de mai 2013, une série de manifestations de masse s’est déroulée sur la place Taksim à Istanbul, et s’est rapidement répandue dans toute la Turquie. Les manifestations ont été initiées par un groupe s’opposant à la l’abat-tage d’arbres prévu dans le cadre d’un projet de modernisation urbaine dans le centre-ville. Une opération sécuritaire d’envergure a déclenché une réponse massive des résidents d’Istanbul et, plus tard, dans d’autres villes Turques. Peu de temps après cette intervention, environ 2,5 millions de personnes au plan national auraient rejoint les manifestations. Durant près d’un mois, durant sa période la plus active, les manifestations ont fait plusieurs morts, de nombreux blessés et des

dégâts matériels considérables. Mieux connu maintenant sous le nom des « événements de Gezi », ils ont eu un effet dévastateur sur la politique Turque, provoquant le remodelage des réseaux politiques, la refonte des positions idéologiques et la désorganisation des priorités politiques. Cet article examine la politique des protestations de Gezi par rapport aux positions du Parti d'action nationaliste (Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi, MHP), l'un des trois partis d'opposition à l'Assemblée nationale Turque. Fondée il y a plus de 50 ans, le MHP est connu pour ses vues nationalistes d'extrême-droite. Contrairement au principal parti d'opposition, le Parti républicain du peuple (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi, CHP), le MHP n'exploite pas les protestations contre le parti au pouvoir, le Parti pour la justice et le développement (Adaletve Kalkınma Partisi, AKP). Les auteurs analysent les discours et les actions du MHP concernant les protestations de Gezi et concluent que, plus que jamais, la question Kurde est le champ de bataille central pour le MHP, et que depuis les années 1990, le MHP a transformé avec succès les réactions nationalistes à la question Kurde en avantages politiques.

Mots clés: protestations de Gezi de 2013, Parti d'action nationaliste (Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi, MHP), Turquie

The Wolf and the Fist

In the most intense days of the Gezi Park events¹ in Istanbul, a striking picture of the protests began to circulate in the media. In the picture, one could see a hand gesture made by simultaneously raising the little finger and index finger while the tips of the middle and ring fingers touch the thumb.² There were other hands in the picture, one making a fist and another one the sign of victory. In the Turkish politico-cultural context, the first sign is that of the ultra-nationalist *ülküçüler*, the supporters of the Nationalist Action Party (Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi, MHP).³ The latter two, in contrast, are popular markers for leftism. In those furious days, in which the country's population was divided between supporting and criticizing the protests, that picture was worth much more than a thousand words.⁴ The supporters of the protests often referred to that picture as proof of the widespread alliance behind the Gezi protests, which would make the events a folk movement that included every part of society against the government. The detractors of the protests dismissed such a claim, however, by asserting that such pictures, although they pumped up sympathy for the protests, reflected only rare instances and were in no way representative of the dominant character of the protests. Instead, they claimed that the socio-political identities of the protestors did not cut across socio-political boundaries in Turkey. Rather, in their view, the protests had a recognizable dominant socio-political flavor, which was secular/Kemalist in its political disposition and upper-middle class in its social milieu, ignoring the participation of Turkey's restive Alevi community.

From this perspective, none of the three signs, but especially not MHP's sign, reflected the mainstream of the protestors. Instead, these signs decorated the protest movement. Nevertheless, given the arguments for and against nationalists' involvement in the protests, their traditional statist political disposition, and their understanding of and approaches to the state, state–society relations, the civilian sphere, and civil disobedience, an analysis of the MHP's approach to the protest is long overdue.



FIGURE 1

The picture supporting the assertion that there was an alliance between the uncompromising ideologies against the ruling Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (AKP) in Gezi events

The MHP's Imaginary, Symbolic, and Real Involvement in the Gezi Protests

In the following days, polls showed that the MHP's involvement in the events was nearly non-existent. The MHP's *ülküçü*⁵ youth were involved in the protests only to an insignificant degree. The polling company Metropoll found that MHP voters composed only an estimated 2 % of the protesters, equal to the percentage of protesters who declared that they had voted for the ruling Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, AKP), the main target of the protests.⁶ Soon after, Devlet Bahçeli, the leader of the MHP, clarified its political position by declaring that neither the party as such nor its followers, the “grey wolves,” would support the protests at all. Such a stance was in accordance with their political philosophy, which attaches premium

importance to statecraft and decries any “subversive” actions, which it sees as inimical to the stability of the state structure and the maintenance of political order. Following that declaration, which at the same time implied a directive to the base of the party, MHP’s signs disappeared almost totally from the protests.

The next time MHP symbols appeared in the context of the Gezi events, it was in a manner no less unexpected manner than before. In the AKP counter-rallies where then prime minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan addressed his supporters,⁷ some signs of the MHP reappeared, this time beside the AKP symbols and banners, implying a preference for strong leadership, governance, political order, and stability on the part of a certain segment of the MHP’s grassroots. Erdoğan easily welcomed those symbols, and in some parts of his speeches he even encouraged them. This is how the MHP appeared in the context of the Gezi protests in the imaginary and symbolic senses, but never in the real sense. Both the imagined presence of the MHP in the Gezi protests and the symbolic appearance of the MHP in the AKP counter-rallies made one thing clear: the MHP’s real engagement would have changed the nature and course of the Gezi protests, moving the country toward uncharted waters. Therefore, a series of questions arise regarding the MHP’s attitude toward the Gezi events: Why would the involvement of the MHP in the Gezi events have mattered? And, more important, why did the party choose to stay away from the protests although this would otherwise have been a great chance for opposition?

The MHP and the Gezi Protests: The Party Position

Compared to other Turkish political parties, the MHP was the least effected by the Gezi events of May 2013. The protests directly targeted the ruling AKP, while the main opposition party, the Republican People’s Party (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi, CHP), declared its full support for the protests. The pro-Kurdish opposition Peace and Democracy Party (BDP) was stuck between the call to participate in the protests and the need to protect the “Peace Process”⁸ in which it was engaged with the governing AKP. The process’s future was very much dependent on the continuity of the AKP’s rule in Turkey. Compared to the situations of the other political parties, the MHP’s position was relatively more comfortable. Because of its ideological position and political priorities, the party did not have difficulty distancing itself from the protests. Its political success was remarkable when it managed to avoid identification with the “street opposition” or the “language of the ruling party” simultaneously by locating the logic of its stance in a higher goal: avoiding language and a stance that would prove inimical to the political order while keeping its oppositional distance from the ruling party.

The MHP’s policy toward Gezi protests had two main elements. First, the party kept an eye on the Gezi protests to ensure that the events would not have

a positive impact on the “Peace Process.” Since the beginning of 2013, the MHP had been cautious about the peace negotiations, which has provided the party with a firm ground of opposition. Needless to say, the party finds it harmful for the Turkish state to have any kind of dialogue with the PKK (Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê, or Kurdistan Workers’ Party) in particular and with pro-Kurd politicians in general. Second, as part of its nationalist attitude, the MHP declared a careful position on the negative impacts of street protests on the political stability of the country. In line with this principle, Devlet Bahçeli, the MHP’s leader, stressed the *dark face of the street*, an allusion to Turkey’s troublesome history of the 1970s, when the streets were rocked by protests and blind violence and the country’s political order was marked by instability; Bahçeli called for MHP supporters to stay away from the protests in a speech on 11 June 2013.

The MHP’s attitude toward the Gezi protests evolved in three successive stages in the critical first month of the events. In the first stage, the party was what we might call here a “careful observer.” In the second stage, it became an “active political agent,” and in the third “the routine policy-maker” was back. We will discuss below what each of these means.

The Careful Observer

In the first week of the Gezi protests, the MHP and its leader, Bahçeli, were carefully observing the events, trying to understand what was happening and where it was bound to lead. The Gezi protests caught the country off guard. The size, speed, and shape of the events were astonishing for everyone, even for most of the protestors. Thus, the MHP positioned itself on a safe ground and started to observe the events and actors from a distance. In rare cases Bahçeli made smooth interventions to call for “sobriety” on the part of the ruling AKP and the protestors. The nationalist reaction to “keep the state safe” was rather decisive in this attitude. When the Gezi protests began on 29 May 2013, the MHP remained totally silent for two days, until Bahçeli made a declaration on 31 May. That was the beginning of the position that we call “careful observer.” This position lasted until the meeting of the Party Central Administration Board and the Provincial Presidents’ took place on 7 June, after which Bahçeli made another declaration.

In his 31 May declaration, Bahçeli said that “no fellow MHP members ever played any role in the actions. The party members and friends are invited not to participate in the events” (T24 2013). That was the first officially declared MHP position regarding the Gezi events. Bahçeli’s declaration immediately became subject to criticism in social media. That put a lot of pressure on the party, and Bahçeli allocated an important part of his weekly Assembly Group Speech on 4 June 2013 to explaining at length why the party had chosen not to participate in the protests. In that speech, he pointed to two

factors to explain why the MHP was staying away from the Gezi protests. First, he referred to the uncertain identity of the protestors and the ambiguity of their purposes: “It is impossible for us to have a peripheral place at the Taksim events, let alone to have a central role there. We never drink water from the wells with dark pits. We never rely on ambushes to get parts from provocations” (*Hürriyet* 2013a; translation by the authors). His second emphasis was on the Peace Process—which is inverted in MHP discourse as the “Betrayal Process”—as a political priority: “Where were those people who dare to supervise us today, when we were fighting an honorable fight against the ‘betrayal process,’ the so-called peace process started by the AKP–BDP–PKK alliance? Where were those who fight for a couple of trees today hiding when the real question was the integrity of Turkish nation and the lands?” (*Hürriyet* 2013a; translation by the authors).

It is clear that Bahçeli was belittling the agenda of the Gezi protestors vis-à-vis the agenda of the MHP. In this first stage, Bahçeli’s main effort was to justify the MHP’s indifferent position with regard to the Gezi events and to strengthen his “statesman” image by calling for sobriety. He was careful to underline his opposition to the ruling party but was equally cautious not to call for identification with the “street opposition” either. Thus, the MHP’s position was rather that of a “careful third party”: “For us, the only place where the AKP will be overthrown is the ballot box, by the holy will of the Turkish nation. No benefit will come out of the fogs of uncontrolled streets. For that reason, we have directed our eyes not to the streets but to the man’s arena of politics” (*Milliyet* 2013a; translation by the authors).

The Active Political Agent

The second stage in the MHP’s attitude toward the Gezi events of 2013 was characterized by a clear-cut political position. In other words, the MHP shifted its position from “careful observer” to “active political agent.” There were two main factors behind this repositioning. First, as time passed, the identity and the demands of the protestors in Istanbul and other metropolitan cities became clearer. This clarification was used by Bahçeli to make a distinction between “provocateurs” and “innocent citizens.” Such a stance in a sense echoed the government’s line, which centred on drawing lines between different groups of protestors that made up the protest movement instead of putting them all under one blanket and delegitimizing them with a single brush. Second, as the protests spread across the country and took on a rigid character, a polarization between the protestors and the ruling AKP became inevitable. Owing to this polarization, the MHP and other political parties gradually faded away from the scene. However, fading away from the scene of the protests did not mean that the MHP would be silent about what was happening. Bahçeli looked for an active but outside position, trying to

maintain a distinction between two types of protestors: those protestors who functioned as the tongs of the PKK (or foreign agents' involvement, in general) and the "innocent citizens" who could no longer stand the AKP's politics. Thus, Bahçeli was trying to keep to the main agenda of his party without missing the chance for opposition brought about by the protests.

Bahçeli's press conference after the meeting of the Party Central Administration Board and the Provincial Presidents' on 7 June 2013 marked an important turning point in the MHP's Gezi politics. Although the MHP retained its distance from the protests, Bahçeli seems to have replaced his "statesman" image with that of the "leader of the MHP." In that new framework, Bahçeli seems to have left his holistic negative approach toward the protestors. Instead, he began to classify the protestors into groups and give priority to criticizing Erdoğan. But here he had to tread a fine line in order not to land his party completely on the side of the protestors.

From 7 June 2013 on, the protests intensified, and the clashes between protestors and security forces resulted in deaths on the streets. Accordingly, Bahçeli began to attach much more importance to the protests and took the Gezi protests beyond the routine agenda of his party. He began to describe the Gezi incidents as "the most important question of the country" (*Anadolu Ajansı* 2013). Before 7 June, Bahçeli was rather prone to adopting a holistic approach toward the protestors and describing them as a group of people who rest in the shadow of a bunch of trees. After 7 June, however, he began to distinguish between "those who were agitated by an environmental sensitivity, motivated by personal freedom and a determined will to protect the green nature," and "those illegal organizations, marginal groups, and PKK who try to make Gezi Park a headquarters for their illegal purposes." His rough distinction between "innocent people who look for their democratic rights" and "provocateurs" was politically functional (MHP 2013; translations by the authors).

In this second stage, Bahçeli gave priority to targeting Prime Minister Erdoğan and the ruling AKP. On the one hand, Bahçeli blamed Erdoğan for the turmoil the country was going through. On the other hand, he accused Erdoğan of attempting to steal MHP votes by using the MHP's nationalist symbols in meetings called "Respect for the National Will" (a series of counter-rallies organized and conducted by the AKP). Bahçeli also accused Erdoğan of being a leader who avoids reconciliation, ignores citizens' personal preferences, and is obstinate with society (*Milliyet* 2013b). In short, Bahçeli blamed Erdoğan for deepening the chaos and taking the crisis to another level (Sabah 2013).

As part of the polemic started in this way, Bahçeli showed an inflexible response opposing the use of ultra-nationalist MHP symbols in AKP meetings (in Erdoğan's counter-rally meeting in Sincan, Ankara, for instance, the MHP's unique symbols of the "three crescents" and the "grey wolf" were used

to support Erdoğan). In one of his press releases, Bahçeli said that “the symbols of MHP were used in a rascally way, unabashedly and dishonestly” (*Hürriyet* 2013b; translation by the authors). According to Bahçeli, Erdoğan had tried to pull MHP youth onto the streets and put them in the same frame with the marginal, illegal groups, and when he failed to do so, he resorted to having his supporters raise MHP flags in the crowds to enlarge his base against the protestors (*Milliyet* 2013c).

The Everyday Policy-Maker

The third stage in the MHP’s and Bahçeli’s attitude toward the Gezi events was based on trivializing the Gezi protests and pushing it behind MHP’s regular agenda, that is, the “Peace Process.” After a month’s silence over the Peace Process, the MHP was back to criticizing the negotiations between the Kurdish representatives and the Turkish state. In this stage Bahçeli’s anxious attitude with regard to the Gezi protests was replaced by a relaxed, derogatory position. Bahçeli emphasized again and again that the AKP and Erdoğan should be overthrown not with “the wind of Gezi Park but with the hurricane of bullet box” (*Bugün* 2013). He claimed that “the epilogue of the MHP would not be something similar to Taksim” but would be much heavier than it (*Hürriyet* 2013c).

As has been shown, the MHP’s political position regarding the Gezi events has not been stable or one-sided. In the first week of the protests, the party had a flashback to its unpleasant experiences with the streets in the 1970s and preferred to stay away from the protests. To justify this position, Bahçeli often pointed to the “uncertain” and “deep-dark” character of the Gezi protests. When the protests became widespread and deepened, the MHP kept its position outside the events while trying to get some advantages out of the protests against the AKP and Prime Minister Erdoğan. One of the typical sociological outcomes of massive demonstrations like the Gezi protests is the rise of the far right. Thus, any resurgence in the far right might attract the attention of the ruling AKP. The MHP and its leader, Bahçeli, felt the pressure of the probability of massive movements of their ultra-nationalist votes toward the AKP, thanks to Prime Minister Erdoğan’s strategically well designed nationalist moves, and adopted a defensive position. As the protests weakened toward the end of June, the MHP left this cautious position behind and began to bring forward its original political agenda, namely, the Kurdish question.

Conclusion

There is a global tendency to see collective movements as intrinsically leftist, and this is the case in Turkey as well. However, the fact that an inclusive

collective movement like the Gezi Park protests failed to attract the involvement of the MHP was not because the ultra-nationalists categorically reject any collective movement whatsoever. There have been many protests and collective movements in the past which were initiated and led by the ultra-nationalists in Turkey (Ağaoğulları 1987, 188).⁹

Herbert A. Deane, an American political philosopher known for his engagement with the Columbia University student protests in the 1960s, claims that collective protests ultimately give rise to rightist reactions (1998, 85).¹⁰ One might expect a similar “unintended consequence” for the Gezi Park protests of 2013. However, the polls conducted immediately after the protests did not prove this: there was almost no rise in the MHP’s votes due to the Gezi protests. One connotation of this is that the MHP has been embedded in the Kurdish question. The agenda in Turkish politics when the Gezi protests began was dominated by the peace negotiations between the Turkish state and the Kurdish representatives (i.e., between the ruling AKP and the two main representatives for the Kurdish side, the PKK and BDP). The MHP has always been critical of the AKP’s deliberative attitude toward the Kurdish question and has described the peace process as a “betrayal.” The Gezi protests showed that the MHP, as an ultra-nationalist party, relies heavily on the Kurdish question and will face difficulty in repositioning itself politically if the Kurdish question is solved.

Also, the Gezi protests revealed that the ruling AKP has a significant number of rightist-nationalist voters. That is why it has easily absorbed the nationalist reactions against the protests. In the counter-rallies run by the AKP after the protests, Prime Minister Erdoğan did not hesitate to embrace the symbols of the MHP. Those symbols indicated that the otherwise invisible nationalist tendency within the AKP was powerful enough to absorb the ultra-nationalist reaction to the protests. This suggests that the AKP’s “central right” position has been reinforced. With regard to the AKP’s relation to rightist voters, it had been argued that the AKP had borrowed a very important mass of rightist votes and that in the case of any political shocks those votes would return to their original place, namely, to the MHP. This argument has failed to pass the empirical test in the Gezi protests.

Although the MHP has a very rigid ideological line, it is hard to say that the party is based on a monolithic structure. A panoramic analysis allows one to say that the party is fractured between at least two sides: On the one hand, there is the urban, mainly coastal constituency, which is quite close to the CHP’s nationalist attitude. On the other hand, the MHP has a large base in rural areas, which we might call the inland constituency. These two sides, with different tones of nationalism, bring about different political attitudes and preferences. The MHP’s structure and the party’s relatively inactive position in the Gezi events has a lot to do with this. In terms of the type and tone of nationalism, the inland voters of the MHP

have a lot in common with the AKP's nationalist voters, whereas the coastal MHP voters are, instead, of the same type as the CHP nationalists. The members of the former category, namely, the conservative-religious MHP voters, have much more weight in the total MHP constituency, and this has played a smoothing role in the determination of the official party position as a quiet, relatively non-responsive actor.

The Gezi protests emerged out of the blue and became an unpredictable subject in the political agenda of the country. Both political parties and their voters, as well as the media, lacked a panoramic understanding of the protests at the beginning of the events. This was another smoothing factor which helped the MHP with adopting "a legitimate distance" from the protests. The leader of the MHP, Devlet Bahçeli, repeatedly underlined the "dark face" of the protests, which would never have been the MHP's choice, he insisted. There have been allusions in Bahçeli's discourse to the "illegitimacy of the streets." After all, Bahçeli is well known and in most occasions appreciated for his leadership, distinguished by his capability to keep the MHP's youth constituency off the streets. Bahçeli's political image as the powerful leader who kept the MHP youth off the streets was a product of the political atmosphere of the 1990s, when the country suffered from the most violence related to the Kurdish question. An important conclusion from the Gezi protests with regard to the MHP's part is that the Gezi protests showed that the nationalist anger of the 1990s (raised by the violent aspect of the pro-Kurdish movement) has been successfully transformed into political fuel by the party.

Notes

- 1 In the summer of 2013, a series of demonstrations began in Istanbul (Turkey) in opposition to the local government's remodelling of the well-known Gezi Park. The protests began in late May and spread throughout the country in early June, with nearly 2.5 million people participating, according to the estimations of the Ministry of the Interior (*Radikal* 2013). The protests faded by the end of summer, leaving six dead and thousands (including both police and protesters) injured. The events dominated the country's agenda for weeks and were powerful enough to reshape the political composition in the country.
- 2 Known as the "grey wolf sign" (*Bozkurt işareti* in Turkish), this hand gesture is very similar in shape to the "sign of the horns" in the heavy metal subculture in Western countries, but the signs' meanings have nothing in common. Several different versions of that picture were in circulation; a well-known one depicted a bunch of young people running from the police attack, with totally incompatible ideological signs coming together in a single frame: one was carrying a Turkish flag onto which was inscribed an image of Atatürk (the flag in this form refers to "Kemalist nationalists"), one was holding a flag of the Peace and Democracy Party (Barış ve Demokrasi Partisi, or BDP) to represent the Kurds, and one was

- making the “grey wolf” hand gesture of the ultra-nationalist MHP.
- 3 The Nationalist Action Party, or Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi (MHP), is one of the opposition parties in Turkey’s Grand National Assembly today. Its history goes back to the 1940s, when a group of members of Parliament separated from the Republican People’s Party (CHP), the founding party of the republic and the single ruling party until the 1950s. MHP as we know it today was founded in 1969 by Alparslan Türkeş, a military officer who played a role in the *coup d’état* of 1960. The party is known for its strict Turkism, that is, ultra-nationalism. Türkeş died in 1997, and Devlet Bahçeli has led the party since then. It has received around 13 % of the votes in at least the last two general elections (14 % in 2007 and 13 % in 2011). Projections indicate that it will not have difficulty passing the national threshold of 10 % in the 2015 general elections.
 - 4 In Turkish political memory, these symbols recall the bloody clashes between the rightists and leftists in the 1970s, which caused thousands of deaths and eventually led to a second *coup d’état* in 1980.
 - 5 *Ülkücü* literally means “idealist” and refers specifically to MHP’s far-right nationalist youth supporters.
 - 6 Polls showed that most of the protestors (around 40 %) had voted for the main opposition party, the CHP, in the past and that even more of them (around 65 %) would vote for that party in future elections. Around 30 % the protestors declared that they had never voted and would never vote for any party because they did not believe in parliamentary democracy and elections, and nearly 10 % of the protestors had voted for parties that remained below the 10 % threshold. (For varying findings from different poll institutions, see KONDA 2013; Metropoll 2013; *Genar* n.d..)
 - 7 The AKP organized a series of open-air meetings (on 15 June in Ankara, 16 June in Istanbul, 22 June in Samsun, and 23 June in Erzurum) to illustrate that the “people” were on the side of the ruling AKP. That was politically meaningful because both supporters and detractors of the Gezi protests often referred to the “people.” The supporters were referring to the “people” when they argued that the protests were a “folk movement.” The government as well as the detractors were referring to the “people” to say that the AKP administration was an elected government authorized by “the people” to act politically. In a sense, the narrative of the Gezi protests is embedded in a contrast of “the people’s fight against a heavy-handed and overbearing government” versus “an uprising of the privileged against a government that is representative of the people (i.e., commoners).” Hence, there have been two contending narratives of the events. Protestors cast their protest into the lexicon of a people’s uprising against the detached and overbearing rule of the AKP, whereas detractors framed the events as the based in the *ancien régime*’s uneasiness with their lost privilege, while the people’s will and values were reflected in the country’s political structure and its emerging social contract.
 - 8 “Peace Process” is a common term denoting the peace negotiations between the AKP on behalf of Turkish state and the BDP (including the PKK, the armed organization) on behalf of Kurdish policy-makers, a process which was announced in 2010.

- 9 On 4–5 May 1944, a youth protest movement was led by Alparslan Türkeş and his friends, and that is seen as the seed of the MHP.
- 10 Deane discusses General De Gaulle’s “victory” in France in the summer of 1968 and Ronald Reagan’s rise in America in their connection to collective street protests.

References

- Ağaoğulları, M. A. 1987. The ultranationalist right. In *Turkey in transition*, ed. Irvin C. Schick and Ertuğrul Ahmet Tonak, 177–217. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Anadolu Ajansı*. 2013. Bahçeli’nin sağduyu çağrısı. 7 June. <http://www.aa.com.tr/tr/politika/190862—kabus-senaryosunun-karanlik-failerine-izin-vermemeli>.
- Bugün*. 2013. Bahçeli: Sorunların çözüm yeri sandıktır. 16 June. <http://www.bugun.com.tr/son-dakika/bahceli-sorunlarin-cozum-yeri—haberi/665809>.
- Deane, Herbert A. 1998. Öğrenci radikalizmi üzerine düşünceler. *Cogito* 14:81–92.
- Genar*. Poll on Gezi Park protests. n.d. *Genar*. <http://www.genar.com.tr/files/GEZI-PARKI-PROFIL-SON.pdf> (last accessed June 2013).
- Hürriyet*. 2013a. Bahçeli: Kriz üretiyorlar. 4 June. <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/23431913.asp>.
- . 2013b. Pankartlara Bahçeli’den çok sert tepki. 16 June. <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/23514679.asp>.
- . 2013c. Bahçeli: Son sözümüz Taksim’e benzemez. 20 June. <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/23551997.asp>.
- KONDA. 2013. Gezi raporu. 5 June. http://konda.com.tr/tr/raporlar/KONDA_GeziRaporu2014.pdf.
- Metropoll. 2013. Türkiye’nin nabızı: Gezi Parkı protestoları. 7 September. <http://www.metropoll.com.tr/arastirmalar/siyasi-arastirma-9/1731>. Page: 1
- MHP. 2013. Bahçeli’nin basın açıklaması. 7 June. http://www.mhp.org.tr/htmldocs/genel_baskan/konusma/2860/index.html.
- . 2013a. Bahçeli: Taksim olaylarının içinde olmayız. 4 June. <http://siyaset.milliyet.com.tr/bahceli-taksim-olaylarinin-icinde/siyaset/detay/1718387/default.htm>.
- . 2013b. Esadlaşmak mahveder. 8 June. <http://siyaset.milliyet.com.tr/esad-lasmak-mahveder/siyaset/detay/1720097/default.htm>.
- . 2013c. Bahçeli o bayrakların hesabını soracak. 18 June. <http://siyaset.milliyet.com.tr/bahceli-o-bayraklarin-hesabini/siyaset/detay/1724552/default.htm>.
- Radikal*. 2013. Gezi Eylemlerinin Bilançosu Açıklandı. 23 June. http://www.radikal.com.tr/turkiye/gezi_eylemlerinin_bilancosu_aciklandi-1138770
- Sabah*. 2013. Bahçeli erken seçim istedi. 8 June. <http://www.sabah.com.tr/Gundem/2013/06/08/bahceli-erken-secim-istedi>.
- T24*. 2013. Bahçeli: Polisün günahı ne? 1 June. <http://t24.com.tr/haber/bahceli-polisin-gunahi-ne-mhpnin-hic-bir-ferdi-olaylarda-yer-almadi/231117>.