



## *Güneş Ne Zaman Doğacak?: A different approach from the perspective of Turkish cinematic art*

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### **Abstract**

Discussing the debate and ideological background regarding national cinema, this form of art shall be compared to several other contemporary cinematic currents in Turkey. In this study, a content analysis comprising one of the rarer examples of national cinema, the film *Güneş Ne Zaman Doğacak?* (Mehmet Kılıç, 1977) will be conducted while scanning secondary sources on Turkish cinema to present a concise picture; of the phenomenon that is known as 'national cinema.' Distinctive characteristics of the artistic language and the ideological background of the post-1960 Turkish cinema will be provided, among those, the phenomenon of a very blurred line between creative expressions and underlying ideological affiliations and the non-static developmental nature of cinematic fashions in influencing each other.

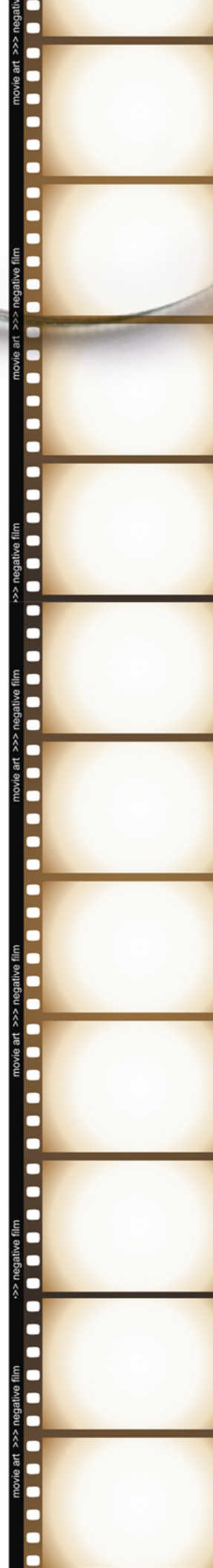
**Keywords:** Anti-communism; Anti-imperialism; Turkish National Cinema; Political Cinema; Turkish Cinema History



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## *Güneş Ne Zaman Doğacak?: A different approach from the perspective of Turkish cinematic art* Mehmet Yılmazata, Erdem Güven

### Introduction

Along with its artistic importance and entertainment functions, the medium of cinema has been used as a political and ideological weapon to influence the masses since its early beginnings. The global cinema industry, particularly the mighty studios in Hollywood, effectively used this ideological weapon and continued to do so nowadays. The Turkish cinema industry began to grasp that fact more consciously during the 1970s. Many discussions on a better representation of inclinations concerning political and societal changes emerged in line with this awakening. However, while particular forms of art and their respective aftereffects regarding the Turkish cinema landscape have been looked upon in-depth, the broader subtext within it that partially emerged under the impression of widening ideological differences have not yet been exposed widely. In particular, currents as social realism, often under the enthrallment of Italian and Soviet interpretations, gave way to express political thoughts, more prominently within the leftist camp, and have been interpreted as such within the scope of "revolutionary cinema."

This paper aims to provide a short glimpse into Turkish cinema and its different manifestations as a medium of modernization in the arts from a historical perspective. It will focus on the

development of the trend known as "national cinema." To provide a greater understanding of the topic, the film "Güneş Ne Zaman Doğacak?" (Kılıç, 1977) that begets a synthesis of the two different interpretations of national cinema will be illuminated according to the postulates of "national cinema" and set into relation with the relevant political and artistic precipitations during the 1960s and 1970s.

### **The Historical Development of Artistic Trends in Turkish Cinema: From Muhsin Ertugrul to Social Realism**

It can be said that the medium of cinema was physically imported from Western Europe into the space of cultural entertainment in Turkey at the beginning of the 20th century. Besides that, Ottoman-Turkish entertainment culture and the arts were exposed to Western European influences since the 18th century (Balay, 2009, p. 95). In line with the Turkish economy's peripheral state in the years before and after the Great War 1914-1918, cinema as a medium of art and entertainment did advance only rudimentary during the Republic's first years. One of the pioneers of local film production and distribution was Muhsin Ertugrul, whose impact on artistic language and perception of cinema's medium was influenced by his professional background as a theatre director. It is not farfetched to juxtapose that Ertugrul, due to his experiences gained

abroad during Western European cinema's founding years, did indeed emerge as the first serious Turkish cinema producer with the relevant technical know-how. (Sevim, 2016, p. 67). However, the claim that a top-down-modernization process, with the radical eradication of traditional values instead of "Western" ideals (the theory of cultural break) as attributed to the government of Kemal Atatürk, reflected itself in Ertugrul's cinematic works appears unfounded (Akser & Durak-Akser, 2017, p. 57). This claim wholly ignores the Kemalist government's cultural policy on re-claiming Turkish and Anatolian folk culture and adapting it to the contemporary cultural landscape and the arts (Şakiroğlu, 1988, p. 813). Besides that, Western theatre, music, and literature had been a shaping factor of cultural transformation on the elites of Ottoman government bureaucracy and the imperial Ottoman household itself, which became more visible since the middle of the 1850s (Akansel, 2011, p. 163-165). Besides that, traditional Turkish forms of entertainment, the ortaoyunu, a state of dialogical play, and the shadow-theatre (Karagöz) vice-versa affected Turkish interpretations of the "Western" theatre and, as its successor, the emerging film industry in Turkey (Görgün, 2018, 281-297). Even if Ertugrul is described as a cultural representative of the governments' modernization policy, the reflection of so-called "Western" values in politics as well as in culture was not just a result of the Republican

reformism but of the Tanzimat reformist policy that was pursued since the 1830s in the Ottoman realms (İnalçık, 2018, 32).

Furthermore, the strained financial situation of the cinema industry and the availability of cheaper foreign-produced films that were shown in Turkish movie theatres have also to be considered when reflecting on the relative lack of political themes in Turkish cinemas until the 1940s and 1950s (Önder & Baydemir, 2005, 125). Notwithstanding, political subjects (i.e. the anti-war message of Lewis Milestone film "Im Westen nichts Neues" were present in imported films and discussed quite vividly between moviegoers and the press. Another example is the Soviet-made documentary "Türkiye'nin Kalbi Ankara" shot by the famous Soviet director Sergei Yutkevich, for the tenth anniversary of the Republic of Turkey. The documentary film was produced with the approval of Atatürk and widely shown in the Turkish film theatres (Lüleci, 2014, p. 45).

According to Bahar Tugen (2014, p.160), the first examples of distinctive political films were not seen until the 1960s. Many scholars agree that the politicization in Turkish cinema is associated with the 1960 coup d'état, after the military intervention and the declaration of a new constitution that provided more significant legal guarantees for the formation of associations, political and non-political alike, currents in academia, art and cinema were shaped mainly in discourse with socialism (Kaya & Yücer, 2018, p. 565). In the 1960s, the main arguments

shaping Turkish cinema were discussed in contrast between the proponents of “domestic Turkish cinema” and “revolutionary (socialist) cinema.” Ideological values affected, shaped, and defined those arguments (Tugen, 2014, p. 160). Accordingly, the phenomenon of social realism was crafted mainly in an intellectual process that emerged from an intensive study of Marxist literature and was subsequently reflected in motion pictures as the first distinctive manifestation of ideological viewpoints in Turkish cinema.

It should be noted that while the Soviet Union was the first country that developed social realism as a form of art on a broader basis, the first examples of realism on the screen were David W. Griffith’s controversial film “Birth of a Nation,” the films of Charlie Chaplin and late 1920s / early 1930s German films as der “Sinfonie der Großstadt” that focused more on realistic topics and the daily life without romantic subtext (Çebi, 2006, p. 39-40). Social realism in Turkish cinema differs from other examples following ideological manifestations and policies emerging in Turkey in the 1960s. As a modernizing ideology between the 1930s and 1950s, Kemalism used to be interpreted as relatively centrist, state-centered, and, besides the motion of national suzerainty, much void of different ideological thoughts (Tekinalp, 2012, p.79). This is explainable through the continuity of Ottoman-Turkish bureaucratic tradition in state administration and the military (Pustu, 2007, p. 197-214). After the 1960 coup d’état, some

circles, as the bureaucrats and writers loosely associated around the publication “Yön” (The Way), started to interpret Kemalism as a more revolutionary thought and tried to make it seem compatible with leftist ideology (Atılğan, 2008, p. 176). Turkish cinema was one of the mediums this approach became visible in. After 1960, some films openly started to criticize the “traditional bourgeoisie” and its “sense of property” while the state and its representatives as the army and the police usually were exalted as the “protectors of the public and the ordinary people.” Social realism in Turkish cinema commonly fed itself from two primary sources: the outstanding “Italian new realism” and its profound impacts on visual representation, remarkably rupturing the world cinema (Wagstaff, 2007, p. 7). The other source was the so-called “social movement,” current Turkish literature that started to manifest in the early 1960s. The novels of prominent left-leaning authors such as Yasar Kemal, Fakir Baykurt, Kemal Tahir, and Vedat Türkali were partially adapted. They had quite a massive impact on the characteristics of Turkish cinema (Aslantepe, 2014, p. 135). Many films started to feature social critics, as demonstrated by the proponents of the “social movement.” The prominent figures of social realism in Turkish cinema are usually listed as producers such as Metin Erksan, Halit Refig, Memduh Ün, and Ertem Gırec, whose’ cinematic works rose to the attention of a national and international audience. (Kula & Eliaçık, 2016, p. 384-411). After the emergence of Social Realism in Turkey,

many other streams such as “domestic cinema” (Ulusal Sinema), “national cinema” (Milli Sinema), and “revolutionary cinema” (Devrimci Sinema) emerged side by side.

### **The Two Versions Of “Nationalism” In Turkish Cinema: Ulusal Sinema And Milli Sinema**

To understand the notion of Ulusal Sinema, we have to mention the ideas of Halit Refig. Refig, started his career as a film criticist and later did advance his career as an established moviemaker. According to Refiğ, the film industry in Turkey began to grow by the mid-1950s; accordingly, the Yeşilçam movie factory evolved to become one of the largest movie production centers in the world. Local Turkish films quickly became much more popular in the country than international productions. The tremendous growth in Turkish films kicked off. However, there was no state support and only minimum private investment, owing to the largely local audience of movie consumers whose enthusiasm was not spoiled by the low-budget nature and the technical shortcomings of most productions (Behlil, Cengiz & Refig, 2016, p. 1). Halit Refig, in his role as a theorist of Turkish cinema himself, did remark that the Turkish cinema should be interpreted as a continuation of traditional visual Turkish art forms (i.e., shadowplays and the Orta Oyunu). Due to its distinctive character and local inputs, those being different than the theatre tradition as having developed in Western Europe, he postulated that Turkish cinema was



bound to follow an alternative path of cinematics. He rejected cinematic currents that were overtly inspired by Marxist thought, Western capitalism, and the art forms of the bourgeoisie. Refig openly criticized the bewitching dazzle that Hollywood imposed on Turkish cinema, which he saw as a manifestation of American cultural imperialism onto the Turkish cinema industry. Accordingly, Refig strove to produce cinematic artworks focusing on the everyday lives of ordinary Turkish people and their life challenges following the principles of social realism. The most important examples of those kinds of films are Halit Refig's *Gurbet Kuslari* (1964), Metin Erksan's *Yılanların Ocu* (1962) and *Susuz Yaz* (1963), Ertem Göreç's *Otobüs Yolcuları* (1961) and *Karanlıkta Uyananlar* (1965) and Duygu Sagioglu's *Bitmeyen Yol* (1965) (Akser, 2016, p. 62).

Refig, rejecting the blind admiration towards foreign filmmakers instead of focusing on local cineastes as Omer Lutfu Akad and Metin Erksan, stressed cultural self-awareness. Refig distinctively argued for the conscious adaption of storylines featuring Turkish people's cultural and social characteristics and their real-life experiences as the preferred base for story plots.

Refigs' leaning towards Akad might conclude that directors as Akad and Erksan may be seen as forerunners of the *Ulusal Sinema* (Refig, 1968, p. 53). This seems to be in line with Akad's point of view, who chose to single out aspects as social injustice and the idea of the Third World, as demonstrated in the film *Hudutların Kanunu* (Law of the Border). Traditionally, such themes

were closely associated with leftist views but were readily adapted by filmmakers as Refig. Here we can see the blurred ideological line between left and right in Turkey, which manifested itself in cinematics. Refig interpreted this problem as following: stressing that the topoi of “social justice” as well as “holy justice” are rooted collectively in the mind of “Eastern societies” that are imagined to be somewhat more collectivist than individualist, he implied likewise that left and right are basing their foundations onto the same source (Akser, 2017, p.125). This also meant that the origins of inspiration, as taken from the realities of life, were naturally much the same for the proponents of revolutionary cinema and national cinema.

Furthermore, the cinematic interpretation of such problems as poverty, development issues, and foreign penetration in terms of the Weltpolitik conducted by imperialist powers was often interpreted in a very similar fashion within both counter currents, whether left or right-leaning.

An excellent example of that complex is the film “Gunes Ne Zaman Dogacak?” which will be discussed extensively to show parallels and similarities. In conclusion, revolutionary cinema might have chosen to lead such problems with a subtler artistic language. In contrast, national cinema uses a more blatant technique, i.e., openly blaming “the foreigners” instead of “the capitalist or the landowner” (Pösteki, 2012, p. 141-71).

Yücel Cakmaklı is widely accepted as being the notion of “Milli Sinema” concept; it was he who did coin the term in the Journal “Tohum” (Seed) in 1964. The religious conservative-leaning film director Cakmaklı started to criticize Yesilcam for taking up film genres like adventure, comedy, or historical action and initially adapting those to the local taste, but then simply choosing to (poorly) imitate foreign films as early as in the 1960s and 70s. (Unur, 2015, p. 542). Instead, Cakmaklı envisioned a different; local movie concept focused on promoting national and traditional values, including religion. The first film that was shot in line with this concept by Cakmaklı was *Birlesen Yollar* (Uniting Ways) (1970).

In the 1970s, leftist, nationalist, and Islamic political circles, primarily journalists, students, and politicians, heavily criticized the classical Yesilcam genre films as being merely commercial, non-artistic, and flawed. The effect of Hollywood style romantic or action films on the Turkish moviegoer audience and badly remastered, increasingly violent Turkish adaptations of Italian “spaghetti Westerns” was criticized by groups of all political spectrums to have had destructive effects upon Turkish society; the film industry was pointed at for supposedly leading to the cultural degeneration of the Turkish society. Cakmaklı pointed out that Milli Sinema emphasized freedom from foreign cultural imperialism and the defense of national culture from an artistic standpoint (*Milli Sinema Açıkoturumu*, 1973, p.46). According to the proponents of national cinema, primarily being rooted within the nationalist and conservative political spectrum, cinema

as a form of art was supposed to be the catalyst of the return of society to the values of its forefathers, to its Turkish and Islamic essences. The leftist camp, for its part, criticizing the seemingly apolitical nature of Turkish cinema, proposed the thesis that the notions of class struggle and class consciousness had to be emphasized more aggressively (Hepkon & Şaki Aydın, 2010, pp. 79-103). Within that scope, they reflected the Leninist definition of culture that was seen as a tool and element of class struggle to create political conscience within the masses, subsequently revolutionizing them (Lenin, 2008, p. 48). Notwithstanding its rejection of revolutionary motives as thinly veiled Soviet cultural imperialism, the Turkish right was not isolated with its postulates regarding the moral standards of the film industry. The repeated arguments by rightist circles about the loss of traditional values due to films that supposedly “corrupted the youth” were not unheard of by similar movements in Western Europe and even in conservative circles in the US.

The very notion of Milli Sinema (national cinema) did gradually emerge from the ranks of a student group, the Milli Türk Talebe Birliği (MTTB). Founded in 1916 as the first student association of Turkey, over the years, it changed its ideological notion from being centrist, then left-leaning, and finally more nationalist-conservative and political Islamic. Following the proclamation of the Republic of Turkey by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk in 1923, an MP from Rize of

the ruling Republican Peoples Party (CHP), Tahsin Bekir Balta, became the director of the MTTB and fostered Kemalist principles and the ideals of Republicanism to emerge within its ranks, using, among other things, the medium of print through the means of the “Birlik Gazetesi” (Unity Newspaper) (Çakmak & Kaya, 2019, pp. 227-67). In those years, the association and its members saw itself as the defender of the principles and ideals of Atatürk under the political line of the de-facto single-party government. After introducing a multi-party system in 1945/1946, MTTB kept on its activities mainly in line with the Kemalist founding ideology between 1946-1960 while, vastly under the impression of the looming Cyprus conflict, started to show also more significant nationalist tendencies. Between 1960-65 leftist tendencies began to emerge in the association that not necessarily conflicted with nationalism. Both left and right political camps started to criticize the US Cold War policy and its repercussions for Turkey as a front state that shared a border with the USSR (Öztürk, 2016, p. 110). This also was a partial reaction to the cooling down of relations with the US, who were seen as unsupportive towards the cause of Turkey in its policy towards the island of Cyprus. It is noteworthy that the leftist student movement in Turkey at the beginning of the 1960s, besides its Anti-American and Anti-imperialist rhetoric, also openly nationalist tendencies within its ranks. After 1965, the association gradually evolved into becoming the defender of political Islam.

The producer of the film that is to be analyzed, “Güneş Ne Zaman Doğacak?” Mehmet Kılıç can be counted among the more prominent member of the MTTB. Kılıç’s films do symbolize the era of change MTTB was going through. In line with political tendencies within the rightist-nationalist camp in Turkish politics, Milli Sinema and Ulusal Sinema started to change their direction accordingly. Contemporary and patriotic-themed films as Sezercik Küçük Mücahit (1975) by Ertem Göreç or Önce Vatan (1974) by Duygu Sağıroğlu featuring the Cyprus Crisis employ religious elements as the call to prayer (azan) and national secular elements (female warriors or the Turkish Armed Forces). This mirrored actual events in the domestic and international political arena and created a reasonable basis for such films to gain more standing within the Turkish audience.

On the political stage, however, the nationalist movement evolved into a classical nationalist, strictly Anti-Communist movement, that in line with the sizeable conservative element in a still agrarian society, embraced traditional Islamic values and incorporated those into its ideology.

Özde Nalan Koseoglu (2013, p.145) states that the increased dose of Islamism in the rightist political camp directly impacted the association standing. Besides being MTTB’s general secretary, Kılıç was also a member of the “Akın Group” which was founded by Abdurrahman Dilipak, a writer representing political Islam, and Salih Diriklik. Their main target was to

separate their works from the traditional Yesilcam Ecole. To mention their aims, the members of the “Akın Group” have published a statement:

“We have the decisiveness of warning our people against the Marxist and capitalist doctrines which effectively makes them the slaves of Satan; furthermore, we have the ambition to unite our people with their true identity. We are struggling for our beliefs that also include economic and aesthetic dimensions. All the Third World countries Crimea, Kirkuk, Turkistan, the Middle East, Chad, Eritrea, the Philippines, Cyprus, Bangladesh, and the remote places of the awakening Africa are waiting for our RESURRECTION.” (Ucakan, 1977: 185-186).

These developments have to be interpreted within Turkish domestic policy and the cementation of ideological conflicts between the left and the right. Cultural policy in journalism, the arts, and literature, and therefore cinema, increasingly became a political battleground that became visible in the conflicts and ruptures that manifested themselves in Turkish universities (Koca, 2018, pp. 87-109). Nevertheless, the medium of cinema slowly did evolve into a tool onto which ideological thoughts could be projected to reach the moviegoing masses. Left-wing political activists advocated using cinematic art as an educative instrument to explain and propagate their political views. In contrast, the proponents of conservative and nationalist political ideas were instead focused on the print media. They did not pay the same attention to political filmmaking as their opponents on the left political spectrum. Accordingly, the MTTB sought to develop an

artistic language that could express its distinctive national and traditionalist worldview without wanting to seem old-fashioned. In line with the MTTB's approach towards the art of cinema, one of the keywords of artistic representation had to be "self-consciousness" (Milli Sinema Açıkoturumu, p.47). This kind of cinema was supposed to reorganize Turkish societal values and teach religious and national values to be an attractive role model to the younger generations. To support this approach, four famous film directors of Yesilcam, Metin Erksan, Halit Refig, Duygu Sagiroglu, and Yucel Cakmakli were invited by the MTTB cinema club to participate in a symposium along with directors Salih Diriklik and Sami Sekeroglu (Yorgancilar, 2019, p.6). This symposium became the theoretical catalyst for the ideological foundations of national cinema.

First and foremost, the participants were united in their view that national and traditional values had to be adapted to the language of cinema and preferably should draw their inspiration from real-life problems. Films representing those values had to be adjusted according to the taste of a local audience; the slavish reproduction of Hollywood topics was deemed unacceptable. The proponents of "revolutionary cinema" and its association, the "Turkish Sinematek Association" (Cinematecque), were heavily criticized by Metin Erksan, Halit Refig, and Duygu Sagiroglu for not shooting films that were more compatible with the Turkish culture as defended by its



conservative interpreters (Yenen, 2012, p. 245). However, the notion of religious values as an essential part of national cinema did not remain unchallenged. Erksan, Refig, and Sagiroglu were unwilling to completely subscribe to the concept of religious-conservatively shaped “Milli Sinema.” They instead chose to adopt a slightly more secular version of national cinema by coining the name Ulusal Sinema.

Nevertheless, they had accepted MTTB’s invitation to the conference. They saw this meeting as an opportunity to argue in favor of a genuine soul searching and new expressive forms within the Turkish film industry. The tradition was accepted to have been largely shaped by religion and its influences on Turkish society. However, the distinctive values of Turkish identity were deemed necessary to manifest themselves also in Pre-Islamic Turkish history and culture that continued to live on within the national conscience. Accordingly, films as Tarkan and Karaoğlan, featuring legendary pre-Islamic Turkish heroes that were readily accepted by the cinematic audience in the early 1960s without bearing any religious references could be used as positive examples (Cantek, 2003, p.243). This intra-traditionalist debate would show itself in terminology and the choosing of possible themes for films.

According to Halit Refig, the Turkish-Mongolian word ulusal was coined and used by progressive and mostly secular circles, but milli as a word of Arabic origin word was consciously adopted by Yucel Cakmakli to mention the religious and Islamic leaning of topics within Turkish

cinema (Türk, 2001, p. 263). It might be summed up that Refig, Erksan, and Sagiroglu's mainly strove to create a domestic, culturally, and financially independent cinema industry that entirely belonged to Turkish culture and history in a national and secular manner. However, a compromise was reached insofar as religious elements were accepted as a necessary part of national identity and duly represented on the screen. Concluding, the nationalist camp was united insofar as that Turkish cinema, in their understanding, could and should point out social problems and that the artistic language should be void of references towards Hollywood, just as postulated by their leftist rivals. Nevertheless, the proponents of national cinema rejected the adaption of the notion of class struggle on the screen (Milli Sinema Açıkoturumu, p. 39). The Turkish nation was expected to draw their cinematic inspiration from their values and traditions, uniting against any forms of imperialist dominance; naturally, Marxism and its manifestations were seen as a masked form of Soviet cultural imperialism. In reality, though, all cinematic currents were forced to continue adapting certain cinematic elements a la Hollywood to satisfy the local audiences' tastes or risk creating correct ideological pieces that flopped in the theatres. Furthermore, the influence of European and even Japanese cinema on Turkish screenplay interestingly was never really questioned by neither the proponents of social realism, national or

revolutionary cinema. In its less commercial nature, it was most likely just accepted as a legitimate source of inspiration.

It is essential to point out that it is not always possible to strictly separate cinematic trends from each other. Given the nature of the Turkish cinema industry, namely its personal and artistic continuity, a strict distinction by creative expression or political affiliation was nearly impossible. It was not unseen for an actor or director to frequently switch roles and personas between the cinematic currents. This is eminently true for the blurring line between Milli Sinema and Ulusal Sinema and –even if just partially- even the revolutionary cinema. Artistic elements and social themes often interchanged between all of those, as mentioned earlier. The most remarkable parallel between Milli Sinema and Ulusal Sinema is that essential topics such as patriotism, traditional and religious values are among the main pillars of those artistic streams. However, while Milli Sinema is usually taking a greater emphasis on religion, Ulusal Sinema is presenting itself as a more secular alternative.

There was also an effort to create a “Nationalist Cinema” Ecole (“Milliyetçi Sinema”) by the Turkish nationalists different from “Milli Sinema” and “Ulusal Sinema”. For instance, Üstün İnanç discussed the possibility of a “Nationalist Cinema” Ecole with those words: “Now, it’s the turn of the cinema. The members of the Turkish nation whose eyes are searching Eastern Turkestan are waiting for great works of art from you. Turk! Create the National cinema Ecole!”.

According to İnanç, cinema is essential for propaganda against the “degeneration of the [Turkish] society” (İnanç, 1967, 19). However, the “Nationalist Cinema” Ecole could not succeed and could not find sufficient financial support from the nationalist circles (Küpçük, 2019, 67).

### **First Example Of Nationalist Cinema: “Güneş Ne Zaman Doğacak?”**

According to Serkan Yorgancılar, the discursive and ideological emphasis in the art of cinema is hidden in the scenario and the text (Yorgancılar, 2019, p. 4). Popular mass and “soap bubble” films may very well have ideological messages hidden in the subtext. For example, many films starring the (mainly comedian) actor Kemal Sunal were created by the Yesilcam film industry within the comedy genre. Notwithstanding the funny context, such films particularly emphasized the social realities in the social process of urbanization in Turkey that started in the 1950s. They featured topics as the growing social inequality, youth unemployment, corruption within the public sector, and society as a whole by using wit, humorous but also tragicomic elements just as in the early films of Charlie Chaplin (Teksoy, 2015, p. 43).

The film “Güneş Ne Zaman Doğacak?” (When will the sunshine again?), released in 1978, directed by Mehmet Kilic and starring Oya Aydoğan and Cüneyt Arkin, is one of the few

examples of the ideal of Nationalist Cinema that has been adapted for a wider audience in Turkey. First and foremost, it has to be evaluated from the background of political radicalization and armed clashes between left wing and right-wing political groups in the country during the 1970s. The film is also alleged to be the catalyst of the “Maraş Incidents /Massacre” during the violent clashes between political camps; albeit this has always been vehemently denied by the director. (Küpçük, 2019, 68)



Figure 1- Cüneyt Arkın and Oya Aydoğan starring in “Güneş Ne Zaman Doğacak?” (Kılıç, 1977)

While having been shot in classical *Yesilçam* style and often containing unintendedly comical scenes due to technical and budget constraints, the film does employ heavy elements of symbolism and often mixes reality, dreams, and purely symbolic scenes. The story is woven around the heroes Colonel Alpgiray Nuriyes (Baki Tamer) and Yavuz Mehmetol (Cüneyt Arkin). As representatives of a visibly oppressed Muslim-Turkic population live in a dystopian/Orwellian socialist country, likely the Soviet Union but also a symbol for any communist state. It has to be stressed that Turks' characterizations outside Turkey's borders in their habit, culture, and costume is a wildly overdrawn and unrealistic mix of Central Asian, Caucasian, and other elements of Turkish culture. This symbolic cultural image serves, as other parts of the film merely to express the motion of an idealized Turkish identity. The viewer is very likely to recognize most of those symbolic elements as exaggerated but is instead expected to accept these technical shortcomings instead of the main motive: a moral imperative for the call to free the minds and bodies of the Turkish nation, within and outside the Turkish borders. In the beginning scene, the hero Yavuz performs the call to prayer (azan) on the dilapidated minaret of a closed down and damaged mosque, observed by a fearful populace and subsequently arrested by the uniformed representatives' oppressive state. The motif of the call to prayer frequently returns within the film. It serves as the symbolic representation of Islam as a moral and unifying base for the Turkish populace, within and outside the borders of Turkey. After his arrest and

incarceration in a horror film like a prison clinic, his ways cross with Colonel Nuriyes, who, seemingly being a faithful follower of the system, in reality, just as the hero, is part of a non-specified “resistance group.” Colonel Nuriyes’ interactions with the representatives of the oppressive system serve to present the shortcomings and dangers of Communism to the audience with very open -and often crude pointed messages- in a very simplified way. As teachers, officers, etc., the functionaries are shown to be highly corrupted, taking personal gain from the system, betraying ideals as education and fatherland for bribes and career aspirations. Catering to the fear of moral decay in a seemingly conservative viewer group, the state hands out financial benefits for “children born out of wedlock” and employs a “godless society” to destroy religion. Primordial fears of a relatively conservative society are used to present “the Communist” as a perverted, morally decayed individual who propagates sexual promiscuity. This very flat image was involved in contemporary Anti-Communist propaganda in Turkey to show society the evils of Marxism in a simplified way.

Interestingly the proponents of the revolutionary cinema in Turkey in their films likewise featured similar themes of promiscuity and moral decay as an outcome of a rotten capitalist system, turning the table insofar as the socialist film heroes are usually pure beings that cater to traditional Turkish moral values (Kalkan, 1992, p. 38).



Nevertheless, thanks to the cunning of Colonel Nuriyes, both of the resistance fighters managed to flee to Turkey, but not before a highly symbolic scene in which the Turkish elders betroth a traditional Turkish flute (kaval) to Yavuz, which is said to symbolize the continuance of 5000 years of Turkish history. Throughout the film, the flute and its melody are seen as cultural perseverance, identity loss, and alienation. The heroes are bid farewell and send to Istanbul, “the capital of Turkishness,” while being reminded that the Ottoman sultans were ruling the realms of the world for centuries from there. Furthermore, they state the words “*Allah ben bilen*” which seems to be a more or less free linguistic interpretation of a slogan of Turkestani Anti-Soviet freedom fighters. This slogan is derived from the words “*Biz Alla Bilen / Tanrı Biz Menen*” that was also used as a badge symbol of the German Wehrmachts’ World-War Two Era 162.

Infanteriedivision (*Turkestanische*), comprised mostly of former Soviet POWs of Turkish-Central Asian descent who opted to fight on the German side (Hoffmann, 1986, pp. 35, 67).

Whatever the background, we can see the principles of Pan-Turkism and a supranational Turkish identity as one of the moral ideals and leitmotifs of the film.

After arriving in Istanbul, the duo is embraced by Turkish soldiers and subsequently taken under the auspices of Turkish security officials, who in the film represents a positive depiction of the state. Being aware of the political refugees’ special status, the Turkish officials do grant them asylum but not without observing their movements due to security concerns and protecting both

of them from the long arm of the foreign enemy. Interwoven into the scenario is a spy tale with an agent, calls himself “Boris, just Boris” and tries to kill Yavuz and the Colonel, starting a game of hiding and seek. The agent Boris is a simplified version of the evil communist hitman/spy as seen in contemporary Cold war films (i.e., James Bond), and shown as coldhearted, merely cruel, and therefore an embodiment of the opposing sides of Communism. Director Mehmet Kilic does not simply strive to present one-dimensional foreign enemies, but, in line with the principles of “national cinematography,” tries to emphasize soul searching in Turkish society itself. From the background of a growing politicization between the camps of the left and the right, the film, while openly positioning itself closer to the right-nationalist side, tries to spread the message to restrain both sides from radicalization. This educational message is shown in the example of a father and his young daughter, Cemile (Oya Aydogan), whom the asylum seekers get acquainted with during a random encounter in a cultural event. Cemile serves as an essential role model for the second part of the film: her journey under the moral tuition of Yavuz is more than just a classical coming of age story. Cemile, having lost her mother at a young age, has been brought up by her father and is shown to be a very kind and intelligent young woman. Cemile serves as a visual example to illustrate the conflict the proponents of Milli Sinema believed Turkish society and particularly the Turkish youth were struggling with: the

clash between traditional values and the pop-age, which is presented as corrupt, foreign influence.



Figure 2- Yavuz and Alpgiray dancing on the Turkish coast with the Nationalist song “Çırpınırdı Karadeniz”.

Cemile shows both traits within the film: she is introduced to performing a traditional Caucasian dance that (contrary to real life). Afterward, she conducts a “Saturday night fever” style disco dance. This torn-apart feeling is a characterizing trait of Cemile’s personality and makes her a role model for the younger Turkish society. After Cemile’s father invites Yavuz and Colonel Nuriyes to have dinner, Cemile shows the guests her room, allowing the director to intermingle cultural and political subjects. The room is decorated with a wide range of posters ranging from

Che Guevara, Anti-Vietnam war graphics, and other socialist paraphernalia. Besides that, several contemporary socialist causes are reflected as “Freedom for Carvalan,” “Freedom for Angola,” “Torture ship Esmeralda go away.” Questioned by Yavuz about the sincerity regarding her devotion to the cause, it is understood that her familiarity with political questions seems to be superficial. Yavuz does not criticize her political view per-se but tries to open her eyes to the fact that other nations too-including Turks abroad, the borders of Turkey- might be suppressed, too. In a confronting manner, he asks her which nation she belonged to and criticizes her, uttering “I am Turkish” in a low voice, reminding her to speak out loudly and proudly, stating that she is a part of the Turkish nation. In line with contemporary nationalist ideology, Yavuz, without expressing it openly, evokes historical examples as the Göktürk ruler Bilge Kagan (683-734 AD.).



Figure 3- Cemile in her Communist micro-cosmos

It has to be added, that the Orhun steles, being the first consistent text of Turkish literature, depict the call of the ruler Bilge Kagan for the Turkish tribes to reunite and become self-conscious in order not to be subjected to foreign (Chinese Tang Dynasty) rule. (“Turk, shudder, and come to your senses!”) It might be said that Yavuz here becomes the voice of Bilge Kagan himself; and the audience, if familiar with contemporary Turkish-nationalist ideology, would be likely to recognize that or at least be able to relate to the message. This dialogue leads to a reflection within Cemile who in the later stages of the film, after several discussions and experiences, reverses her political and cultural views. Instead of socialist cultural and political views- exposed by Yavuz as foreign and superficial- Cemile now embraces Turkishness and Turkish culture as the base of her identity. This, however, does not mean that her horizon is narrowed down just to the “Turkish cause”: Cemile still expresses empathy to the struggle of

third world-nations, the poor and oppressed. All this is visualized in the decoration of her room: while certain third-world motives (anti-US /Anti-Vietnam war posters) are still prevailing on the walls, the socialist slogans and Che posters are gone. They are being replaced by posters with romantic depictions of Turkish culture, national heroes and posters expressing sympathy for Turks abroad that are suppressed by foreign hands. Cemile's room is likely a visual representation of the state of mind the Turkish youth is struggling with. Therefore, Cemile's room is a visualized microcosm of the challenges Turkish society is struggling with.

Furthermore, in a dreamlike scene, we do witness Cemile, finding the bridal dress of her late mother. Later, in an imaginary blend-in, we do witness Cemile joining Yavuz in the Caucasian dance that was shown in the beginning, while donning her mother's white bridal dress. The white coloured bridal dress symbolizes pureness and represents the heroines' total devotion to cause and nation. Yavuz, for his part, in that cut represents neither the action hero nor the teacher figure, but rather embodies the whole of Turkish customs and tradition (töre) that changed Cemile's way of life. Notwithstanding, the solution as shown in the transformation process, is the ideal of the proponents of national cinema and reflects a simplified version of their ideal worldview. In the process of Cemile's transformation, the depiction of the flute (kaval) and its

melody are frequently shown and Cemile’s total ignorance towards the instrument and its meaning are replaced gradually by empathy.



Figure 4- Yavuz playing the “kaval”: The Voice of the Turks

As depicted in the film, in the first stage, Cemile is neither aware of the symbolism nor of the importance of playing of the flute. In following dramatic encounters that involve the agent Boris hunting Yavuz and Colonel Nuriyes on the roofs of Istanbul, Cemile is herself placed into danger and gets acquainted with a young student of pharmacy. The student is quite openly depicted as being from the nationalist camp, but restrains himself from physical or even verbally battling his socialist counterparts, merely expressing his disdain for them. He kind-heartedly helps the poor

while jobbing in a pharmacy named “*Ülkü*” (Ideal, a metaphor for the nationalist/anti-communist cause). We may even speculate whether the nationalist/idealist (*ülküci*) movement is somehow graphically presented as a pharmacy that “cures” the virus of “communist and capitalist” exposure.

The young man also tries to support Yavuz and Colonel Nuriyes to escape the foreign agents’ murder scheme. In the story plot, he discusses his views with Cemile, not without being reprimanded by Yavuz that ideological differences are merely pawns that are being introduced by the US and the Soviets (being represented by a caricature in a coffeehouse the discussion is taking place). Within the discussion, a model of national economic development is also briefly discussed that is based on the corporatist economic principles as promoted as an alternative by the nationalist movement, which shows that the film tries to position itself not just as Anti-Communist but also strives to present a worldview that is neither Eastern nor Western. In the continuing plot, Yavuz and the Colonel, while trying to escape the agent, visit a mosque for the morning prayer, but the place of worship is nearly empty besides a few old men. Here, the matter of spiritual guidelessness is addressed in visual form, but paired with the call for prayer as sign of hope, symbolizing the importance religion and traditional values are given by the proponents of national cinema.





Figure 6- Russian, Chinese, and American nations insulting the Turk

In comprehension, while the film is woven around a low-budget like spy tale with evil communist agents pursuing Yavuz and Nuriyes, with the latter sacrificing himself for the cause and the former being the action star, it is interesting to note that the real heroine of the story seems to be Cemile. Cemile is not a passive or supporting female figure, she is supported on a self-finding journey that is interwoven into an action movie. Cemile herself is merely a metaphor for the Turkish youth as an anathema, who strives to discover its own identity while being under a concerted attack by foreign (evil) values. In the film, Yavuz, seemingly the James-Bond / Bruce-Lee like hero, is a teacher-like figure who however does not really teach new insights to Cemile: he merely helps her to re-discover the values she always embodied inside herself. Yavuz serves as a supporting figure to Cemiles father, while Colonel Nuriyes is more like the

representation of an often boyish and naïve, but deeply idealist foot soldier of his cause who subsequently willingly lays down his life on the altar of the fatherland. Notwithstanding, Colonel Nuriyes, while often expressing rage and sorrow, serves as an outspoken warner that tries to warn Turkish society of the dangers that will avail if not countered.

Communism represents the visual, political and outward threat, shown graphically in form of Communist agents, soldiers and officials, but manifesting itself also in slogans and therefore the minds of Turkish youths. On the other hand, pop culture and consumerism manifest themselves in a much more sinister form, leading to greed and the lack of empathy between the different strata of society. Within that scope, not only Communism, but also (seemingly) US- sponsored capitalist consumerism led to an alienation of Turkish society from its traditional values that open the door to imperialist attacks (cultural as well as economic and political) Therefore, the “enemy” is foreign imperialism per se, with neither the US nor the Soviet Union being spared of being the personification of being the pure evil.

This message is taught to Cemile (the Turkish youth) by a number of characters that, in the end, are merely supportive figures to transfer a pedagogic message that simplified can be comprised as: embrace tradition, embrace national identity, do not allow yourself to be misled by ideologies and cultural/ economic values, that you do not really trust.

The film culminates in the fatal wounding of Colonel Nuriyes. In the cut before Nuriyes bids farewell to his friends, we see a powerful image of galloping horses on the plains, an image that recurs when Alpgiray Nuriyes takes his last breath. Given the importance the horse is given in Turkish mythology, the connection of that motif with the story is in line with the films' message of an overwhelming bond between individual, nation and history. Taking into account the horse being an essential part of the livelihood for pre-Islamic Turkish societies, in a spiritual way the dead were believed to ride into the after world on their backs. Hence fore, the passing of Alpgiray Nuriyes stands for the necessary sacrifice of the hero for his cause. This is mirrored by the abrupt return of Yavuz to his homeland by authorities, a fact that is not explained in detail in the storyline. Before passing the bridge from the homeland towards certain death (Yavuz is shot right after crossing the border in the middle of the bridge), he hands the flute (kaval) to Cemile without anyone showing a great deal of emotion. Yavuz has fulfilled his mission and the passing on of the flute stands for the passing of the torch of tradition, homeland and its values to a new, young generation.

## **Conclusion**

As a matter of fact, most Turkish cinematic works after the 1960's were more or less influenced by the trend of social realism. Therefore, it is hard to point out distinctive and clear lines which separate the different currents of Turkish cinematography from each other. The same can be said

for ideological backgrounds in the Turkish cinema landscape which are most of the time rather blurred than clearly distinct. Most of post Great War Turkish films, which might be described as “political” in one way or the other do share the topoi of “Anti-Imperialism” and a certain mistrust towards the stranger, if represented in a political context. Post 1960 Turkish films that targeted a political audience strove, in accordance with the postulates of social realism, to differentiate themselves from “copy-cat Hollywood” films. Those films were criticized from both leftist and rightist camps as being indifferent towards the realities of life and the existence of the individual. Besides that, the structural peculiarities of “Yeşilçam” and its stars, mainly the wish of directors to employ well-known and well liked stars, coupled with (relatively modest) financial perks, necessarily contributed towards a widespread “de-ideologization” among Turkish film stars. Therefore, it was quite possible for an actor to be casted in a film that is classified among the works of “revolutionary cinema” and play its next act in a film belonging to the “National Cinema.” It is even possible to find actors, which took roles in both national and revolutionary cinema, to have taken roles in low-budget erotic films produced in Turkey between 1975 and 1980. It might be said that due to Yeşilçam’s low technical standards and lacking financial support any real “ideological” definition on behalf of Turkish cinema actors became more than blurred and did change from film to film. While all the main trends of post 1960

Turkish cinema, including national cinema, have been claiming a distinctive and clear-shaped role for their films, it is not farfetched to judge most of them as cover versions of foreign adventure/action films that were flowing among the artistic lines of Hollywood B-films.

This appears to be true for nearly all of the films starring Cüneyt Arkin and appears to be valid for the film “Güneş Ne Zaman Doğacak?” (Kılıç, 1977), bearing a striking similarity to the genre of “vigilante” films of Charles Bronson. Arkin does not represent the hard-core law-and order cop, who comforted the conservative segment of Post-Vietnam America, but is a vigilante that acts on behalf of the downtrodden Turkish nation. One of the reasons the film “Güneş Ne Zaman Doğacak?” (Kılıç, 1977) has been chosen as a subject of this analysis is his rare openly “nationalist and Anti-Communist” message. It appears that the segment of Anti-Communist films was more or less served by Hollywood spy-thrillers a la James Bond for the Turkish film going audience. Nevertheless, “Güneş Ne Zaman Doğacak?” (Kılıç, 1977) is also clearly Anti-Imperialist and Anti-American.

The film was addressing the “ülküçü” political camp and therefore was showing a different approach than the Milli Sinema which emphasized Islam and its values as signifying for its artistic message. It is true, that “Güneş Ne Zaman Doğacak?” (Kılıç, 1977) is not opposed to the anathema of “Turkish-Islamic synthesis” and does, quite openly, promote religious messages.

Nevertheless, due to its real target group it also stresses pre-Islamic Turkish values, breaks a lance for Pan-Turkism and focuses more on a Turkish than on an Islamic leitmotif.

In a dystopian, Orwellian country, those who are downtrodden by the maelstrom of a brutal Stalinist state, are represented, often in a very blatant and overstretched way in order to spread the message of national unity and an ideal society, featuring aeons of tradition that go far behind the horizons of contemporary Turkey. The reason for this representation, without doubt, was the wish to awake compassion and wrath for the protagonists and the values they represented. But, instead of being actors in a film, the main characters rather appear as figures of a propaganda poster, frozen in time, than vivid actors that are transmitting a message.

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