

POLITICAL CRISIS AND PARTY TRANSFORMATION:
THE CASE OF AKP IN TURKEY

by

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A Dissertation
Submitted to the
Graduate Faculty
of
George Mason University
in Partial Fulfillment of
The Requirements for the Degree
of
Doctor of Philosophy
Political Science

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Spring Semester 2016
George Mason University
Fairfax, VA

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DEDICATION

To my dear Mother, who taught me never to give up, and helped me build my dreams with her beautiful stories and songs

To my dear Ziya Dayi, who always believed in me, and stood by me to follow my dreams

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank all my friends, family, and colleagues who have helped make this path what it is, and helped me forge meaning. Dissertation is a part of life, and thus witnesses many milestones we experience. People have come, and gone. I have changed.

At the end of this era, I send my deepest thanks to my dear Mother, who would have been very happy and proud to share this with me. My relationship with her has always been the most transformative for me, and it has carved many qualities on my skin. My dear father, who has forever supported me on my never ending dreams that sometimes offered no visible prospect or the comfortable life he hopes for me, and he has always been the unshakable immense tree by my side, giving me the confidence to stand up in life. My dear sister, who has never doubted for a second that I could achieve anything I desired, provided me the leap of faith whenever I needed it. My beautiful nephews and my baby niece have been my eternal energy source, and I'm forever grateful to be in their presence.

I want to thank my uncle, Ziya Boyacigiller, for he has been a constant source of wisdom and a guide who accepted me as I am, trusted and believed in me, respected my decisions yet never let me fight my battles alone. He has always been most supportive of my education, and cast his shadow to protect me even on his worst day, and beyond. Dear Nakiye Boyacigiller, who has picked me up and encouraged me to be resilient and let me feel her presence, while reminding me that those who cannot be with us surround us regardless.

The entire PhD experience, and the many ups and downs of the dissertation process have only been possible to go through with the support of my outstanding committee, who has made it worthwhile and so rewarding. They have always been incredibly encouraging, and I'm very happy to have pursued this path under their guidance. First and foremost my advisor Peter Mandaville; I have always been proud to be his student, and I have learnt extensively from his academic knowledge and the way his mind works. I thank him deeply for being a brilliant role model. Eric McGlinchey has been a source of inspiration from the first day of my PhD program at GMU, and has continued his reassurance and support throughout, which extended to the hard times I experienced. Jo-Marie Burt has shown me the enthusiasm of an academic dedicated to fieldwork and fighting for what one deems right. Moreover, she has been one of the kindest, most generous people I have come to know.

My dear friends, who have helped me put together my pieces, and strive to reach my potential, those who were always there for me to offer help in any way possible, I'm so lucky to have such an amazing group of people around me. My genuine appreciation goes to Sebnem Gumuscu, as the wonderful friend she is, who has always been by my side, motivating me, reading and editing all the drafts of my dissertation, skypeing with me to set the framework, and the many other kinds of support she has generously shared with me. Dear Ilkim Buke, staying up all night editing my dissertation, reminding me that I'm not alone, thank you.

Burcu Gencer, always giving me motivational speeches, never forgetting to check on me while I was confined in my camp at home, being the kind and understanding friend that showed up whenever I needed it, you are the best. Ayse Yazgan, solidifying this dream with me, helping to set up my schedule to the smallest detail, and helping me conquer my inner demons, thank you so much. Basak Gone, and Yasemin Tuna, thank you for sharing my excitement as well as my troubles, you are the sincerest friends one can hope for. Burak Unaldi, Ceren Aydemir, Misra Ozkus, Elvin Levinler, Gokce Percinoglu, you have been among the most beautiful things I have come across during this journey. My wonderful group of high school friends, I extend my gratitude to each and every one of you. Fuat Keyman has been a mentor for me since my university years, I appreciate his support. Noam Ebner, who has always been the greatest person to share my academic milestones since my MA, thank you. My dear IPC team, Cana Tulus, Cigdem Tongal, and all of my bigger family at the offices, thank you so much! My dear college friends, Volkan Cipa, Basak Saral, Ayca Sahin, and Zeynep Tanes, and many more who I cannot list every one of, you know yourselves. These people know me the most and they have always been there for me. I value it deeply. My fellow friends from GMU, who have shown me distances and time does not wear out sincere connections, I appreciate our companionship.

All of my amazing friends at KUMED, thank you! KocPera, for providing me a great spot to write, and the many cafes of Istanbul, DC, and all the cities I visited during this time, I couldn't have done this without you. Thanks to all of the people, professors, colleagues, who offered help through their connections, their data, and their knowledge. Special thanks to Nihat Tuna, as the kind and generous person he is, who have supported me in reaching relevant literature.

Last but not least, thanks to all of my interviewees who contributed to this dissertation by candidly sharing their experiences.

As in the famous poem: "Keep Ithaka, always in your mind < Arriving there is what you are destined for < But do not hurry the journey at all < Better it lasts for years < Ithaka gave you the marvelous journey < Without her you would not have set out." Thank you.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Justice and Development Party	AKP
Welfare Party	RP
Virtue Party	FP
True Path Party	DYP
National Order Party	MNP
National Salvation Party	MSP
Independent Industrialists' and Businessmen's Association	MUSIAD
European Union	EU

ABSTRACT

POLITICAL CRISIS AND PARTY TRANSFORMATION: THE CASE OF AKP IN TURKEY

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George Mason University, 2016

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This dissertation proposes a new theoretical model to explain the causal processes of party transformation. Examining the processes of political transformation from the ideologically oriented Welfare Party (RP) into the catch-all Justice and Development Party (AKP), it demonstrates how the external shock of the February 28 military intervention altered the power dynamics amongst the two dormant factions of the RP. At this critical juncture, the reformists became the dominant coalition within the party, and an opportunity for a change in leadership emerged. With the support of the rising economic classes and civil society, this leadership transition generated suitable conditions for the foundation of the new party, the AKP.

INTRODUCTION

How do political parties transform? What processes explain how an ideological party becomes a catch-all party? Under what conditions do radical political parties mitigate their ideology? How does party transformation transpire in the case of an Islamic political party, and under what conditions? This dissertation addresses these questions by examining the processes of transformation for the Islamic political party in Turkey.

Following two bans from engaging in politics in 1971 and 1980, the Islamic political party achieved nationwide success during the reign of the Welfare Party (*Refah Partisi*, RP) from 1983 to 1998. However, this period did not last long. In 2001, the Islamic political party transformed into the Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkinma Partisi*, AKP). The AKP was founded as a conservative party rather than an Islamic party. It aimed to appeal to society at large. This study examines the processes that explain why and how the political transformation from the RP to the AKP occurred.

The RP achieved its first successes by winning strategic municipalities in the 1994 local elections. It went on to become the leading party in the 1995 national elections. Following the military intervention in 1997, the RP was banned on the grounds that it cultivated anti-secular politics. In 2001, party officials from the RP founded the AKP. In contrast to the limited political scope of the RP, the AKP appealed to a large

section of Turkish society. Since the 2003 elections, the AKP has preserved its majority, single-party government.

The founding members of the AKP were mostly long-time officials of the Islamic political party, the RP. Yet, in terms of both discourse and policies, the AKP has drastically drifted away from its RP origins.

This dissertation analyzes the processes that led to this transformation and the AKP's emergence from the ranks of the RP and the *Milli Gorus* movement, and argues that an external crisis interacted with the internal party dynamics, leadership, and demands of the economic and civil society actors, which tilted the balance of power to the side of the reformists.¹ This process led to the transformation of the Islamic political party from the RP to the AKP.

Existing explanations of party transformation and moderation, such as inclusion, repression, learning, and political economy, do not fully account for the transformation of political Islamism in the Turkish context. This study depicts the relevance of the political party literature more broadly, rather than restricting its analysis to an Islamic political party.

An external intervention by the Turkish military generated a political crisis, which had a decisive impact on the power struggle inside the party in favor of the rising leader of the reformist bloc. The two dormant divisions within the RP, the traditionalists and the

¹ Necmettin Erbakan, the founder of the Islamic political party in Turkey, formed the Milli Gorus Movement. The movement was based on the premise that “underdevelopment of Anatolia and the economic marginalization of the provincial bourgeoisie by the pro-Kemalist Istanbul based capitalists.” (Yavuz 2009). The movement underlined the Turkish-Islamic values and importance of moral conduct of economics.

reformists, and the increasing power of the potential new leader, were affected by the external shock of state repression. This February 28 military intervention created a critical juncture that shifted the balance of power in the party and paved the way for a new dominant coalition.

In the presence of favorable antecedent conditions, this critical juncture created a space for significant change to ensue. This “choice point” empowered the reformists to advance their political agenda, which the preceding set-up of the party did not allow (Mahoney 2002). The juncture provided an opportunity for the reformists to form a coalition, supported by Islamic economic and social actors, and to rise to power. Thus, state repression actually strengthened the hand of the reformists to oppose the status quo policies of the Islamic political party, and to inspire a drastic change.

The major impact of this process was to alter the power dynamics within the party, which shifted in favor of the reformist bloc. The strengthened hand of the reformists was accompanied by the consolidation of power by a new leader, Tayyip Erdogan, who emerged as an alternative to the founder of the Islamic political party and leader of the movement since 1970, Necmettin Erbakan.

With the support of the rising economic classes, the Anatolian bourgeoisie, and Islamic civil society, the reformist bloc outweighed the power of the traditionalists, who were founders of the movement and the party. State repression and strategic calculations to ensure electoral success prompted actors in the party to learn to adapt to the secular Turkish political system. The party program and electoral campaign of the new party, the AKP, stressed secularism and democracy, which suggested an effort to integrate with a

broader coalition in society, and not limit itself to the traditional electoral bases of the Islamic political party.

The February 28 military intervention determined the outcome of the internal divisions in the RP, and the AKP was formed under the popularizing leadership of Erdogan. The reformists formed a coalition with the rising Anatolian bourgeoisie and Islamic civil society. As the AKP entered the Turkish political system, it claimed to have left behind its political past with the Islamic political party, represented by Erdogan's statement that the party had "taken off its Milli Gorus shirt."²

RP to AKP: From Islamic Roots to Claiming the Centre Right

Before dissecting the transformation of the Islamic political party in Turkey, this section describes the variation between the RP and the AKP. First and foremost, the founders of the RP and the party discourse framed the identity of the party around Islam as its defining characteristic. On the other hand, the AKP defines itself as a conservative democrat party. While this characterization is not entirely accurate, it reflects an important change in the party's discourse regarding its identity.³ It should be noted that the AKP has been the ruling party in Turkey for 14 years, and has transformed along the way.

The founders of the AKP were integral members of the RP. They have been involved with the party establishment since they began working for the youth organizations of the Milli Gorus movement and the Islamic political party. In most cases,

² http://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler/2014/08/140807_portre_erdogan

³ Yalcin Akdogan, a long-term colleague of Erdogan, details the definition of 'conservative democrat' to describe the AKP in his 2004 book, *Ak Parti ve Muhafazakar Demokrasi*.

the founders' own personal political histories overlap with the party's history. Oddly enough, especially in its first years of governing, the discourse and policies of the AKP were quite dissimilar from those of the RP. There three main areas of variation between these parties are their positions on foreign policy, economic policy, and secular law. While the RP defined its identity around Islam and stressed the role of Islam in organizing public, political, and economic life, the AKP limited its references to Islam and increased its emphasis on the preservation of the secular Republic, free market economy, a balanced foreign policy, and dedication to EU accession by legislating reforms on human rights, civil-military relations, and the Kurdish issue. These are not mere changes on the discourse, but are reflected in policy differences between these two parties.⁴

Over time, the party's relationships with Islamic law and the secular system presented themselves as new ways of doing politics by focusing on transforming everyday life. As exemplified by an interviewee who worked in the RP's women's branches and then transferred to the AKP, she describes her earlier political self as a radical, Islamists transformed by the understanding that Islamization did not involve the state, and that it was not possible to craft an Islamic society via top-down intervention.⁵

Political party transformation is a key to understanding the prospect for political change, but also the intersection between society and the political system. In a political context where parties can compete in free and fair elections and participate in

⁴ The RP's foreign policy focused on strengthening relations with Muslim countries and embraced a harsh rhetoric against the West. Balanced here refers to foreign policy that oversees relations with all countries.

⁵ AKP Women's branch member, Personal Interview, 2011, Istanbul.

parliamentary politics, examining why and under what conditions parties transform and are able to adapt is relevant regardless of the particularities of the case. The Turkish case demonstrates that the Islamic political party need not be analyzed within its own limited sphere. Nevertheless, interactions between Islam, society, and politics present additional dimensions that have the potential to shed light on various questions, from the struggles of the individual in modern society and the role of religion in organizing social and political life, to increasing individual freedoms versus defining the borders of social conduct, and the role of secularism in strengthening democratic regimes.

Turkey, where the Ottoman Empire, ruled by the Sultan-Caliphate, was succeeded by a secular, democratic Republic, provides an exciting historical context. As a potential threat to the secular character of the state and a challenge to the regime, the role of religion in politics has long been debated, and actions have been taken to restrict it. Therefore, the RP's rise to power rekindled these issues, and the AKP's entrance onto the political scene started a new debate: whether it was indeed a new center-right party or just an offshoot of its Islamist predecessor that had merely undergone a tactical change.

The relationship between Islam and politics is crucial. Turkey, being a country with a majority Muslim society has been a case of interest for the broader region.

Particularly, the experiences of the Islamist political actors that had been involved in electoral politics and became successful are crucial for other Islamic political actors in the region. The development and transformation of the Islamic political party in Turkey is an exemplary case study for the Islamist parties and movements in the Middle East.

Islamist political actors in the broader region have taken the AKP as a model, despite the fact that the dynamics in the Middle East have changed during the evolution of the Arab Uprisings. Erdogan's speech stressing secularism in Egypt is an instance where the AKP model was called into question.⁶ Nevertheless, Ennahda in Tunisia and the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt have been drawn on the experiences of Turkey as an inspiration for their political objectives. The leaders of both of these parties have openly stated their support and interest in the AKP model.

Ennahda continues to take the AKP as a model. The AKP has been the governing party in Turkey for 14 years and, thus, has been a showcase for aspiring Islamic political actors. How relations between society, religion, and politics have played out in Turkey provides a relevant case study for these actors. The performance and political success of the AKP has been influential. As recently as the November 2015 elections, Ghannouchi congratulated the AKP, stating, "Today is an important day for the Arab Spring and democracy."⁷ Also, in the case of the military intervention in Egypt and the subsequent death sentence given to former-President Mohamed Mursi, Erdogan has been vocal in condemning these political developments.

Considering the turmoil amongst political and societal actors, the region is bound to continue its debates around Islam, politics, and democracy. Because Islamic political actors' experiences ruling have been limited, the AKP has shed much light on these debates. The rule of the AKP has been essential to these discussions. From the first day

⁶ *gazetevatan.com*. 2011. "Laiklik Ateizm Degil Korkmayin". September 14.

<http://www.gazetevatan.com/laiklik-ateizm-degil--korkmayin--399589-gundem/> (accessed 15 March 2016).

⁷ [http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/region-reacts-to-akp-victory-in-turkish-elections-----
.aspx?PageID=238&NID=90642&NewsCatID=338](http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/region-reacts-to-akp-victory-in-turkish-elections-----.aspx?PageID=238&NID=90642&NewsCatID=338)

the AKP came to power, the debate about the compatibility of Islam with democracy has been seen in a new light and taken on importance for interested Western policy-makers as well. Close examination of the Turkish case reveals the importance of the literature on political party transformation.

Analyzing Transformation in the Turkish Case

A first glance at the transformation of the Islamic political party in Turkey highlights the role of Islamic businessmen as rational actors directly targeted by the military-secular establishment due to the radical discourse and politics of the RP. In the face of the established owners of capital—organized mostly around MUSIAD⁸ (Independent Industrialists' and Businessmen's Association)—the rising Anatolian bourgeoisie has been closely associated with calls for a new economic program, establishing a free market and minimizing the role of the state (Bugra 1995). Economic and foreign policies are both important to an understanding of the changing politics of AKP. The AKP's economic and foreign policies differed from those of the RP, which focused on building a strong state and asserting policies to create an Islamic society (Eligur 2010, Tugal 2009). With their desire to be integrated into the economic system and fear of being left out due to state repression, economic actors potential play a role as a catalyst for change in the party program. Studies on the role of economic actors have been analyzed in detail (Gumuscu 2010, Demiralp 2010, Atasoy 2009, Yavuz 2006).

While these studies capture a crucial factor in the transformation of the Islamic political

⁸ MUSIAD is short for *Mustakil Sanayici ve Isadamlari Dernegi*. While *mustakil* means independent, the name of the institution has been associated with Muslims, due to the keen stress of the association on being Muslim. <http://www.musiad.org.tr/en>

party, they are limited to one facet of the issue, and leave important factors outside the scope of their theoretical models.

Further research demonstrates that the demands and pressure of an interest group do not fully account for the processes of party transformation. As the Islamic political party emerged from a larger movement, the Milli Gorus, which began in the late 1960s (Tugal 2009), its activities were not limited to economic actors. Moreover, field research suggests the importance of internal party dynamics and the Istanbul organization, referring to the party branch under the leadership of Erdogan.

Although the social dynamics and changes occurring in society are crucial in understanding the reasons behind this transformation, the field research underlines the important role played by the political party in mobilizing society. Civil society explains the dynamics in this process, since the interests of the electoral base were changing along with the political, social, and economic processes in Turkey. However, it should be noted that the party contests the role of civil society, and that the party impacts civil society more than the other way around. As the fieldwork suggests, the external shock—the February 28 intervention—had a powerful impact on all actors involved in the process. It served as a catalyst for political change, creating interactions between the internal party dynamics, its leadership, and its social and economic electoral bases.

Methodology

Revealing the processes at work behind the transformation of the Islamic political party in Turkey and grasping the different dimensions of this process requires close examination through field research. Process-tracing allows for the observation of this

transformation over time and the dissection of the dynamics leading to the split in the party. The February 28 process, as the most expansive repression focused solely on Islamic political actors in Turkey, was a critical juncture for the dynamics that have been unfolding over the last 15 years. The internal division in the party, which began in the late 1980s, along with the rise of Erdogan as a potential new leader, led to the gradual transformation of dynamics within the party. Uncovering the mechanism that caused this, however, requires the incorporation of perspectives from the different actors involved. The Anatolian bourgeoisie and Islamic civil society, which had higher stakes in the political context because of their economic and social interests, pushed the RP out of the system as a radical party and embraced the reformists, which increased their power. February 28 provided the necessary conditions for the reformists to establish a new party under the leadership of Erdogan and with the support of these interest groups. As Schwedler suggests, “moderation may have little to do with religion and everything to do with historical power struggles and local contexts” (2011, 355). In this case as well, ideology and religion are important for the social bases, however, they did not determine their preferences.

The Islamic political actors involved in these processes learned that they could not continue with the RP program or discourse. This led to the establishment of a new party with a different outlook, which gained the support of the electorate beyond its traditional base. However, the extent of this learning was limited. While its initial moves to expand the base and take office transformed its tactics, the AKP did not come to represent a thick democracy. Having held power for 14 years, the AKP government’s practices and

discourses suggest that its proposed model is a majoritarian democracy where the majority decides without much respect or space for minorities or the half of society that does not vote for the AKP.

In order to uncover the processes behind the transformation of the RP to the AKP, the field research was comprised mainly of in-depth interviews and archival research. Fifty semi-structured interviews were conducted, focusing on multiple facets of the party transformation. The subjects were chosen among a wide range of actors who participated in this process: members from the Istanbul and Ankara branches of AKP, including high level party representatives to members of the executive board; party members from provincial organizations in Istanbul; mayors; members of the parliament who have been involved in the party since the RP or earlier as well as its newer members; leading figures in Islamic civil society organizations; Islamic and liberal intellectuals; people who identified as radical Islamists in the past; people in business organizations; leading members of the Gulen movement; members of the Nur movement;⁹ and directors of Islamic foundations.

The method for creating the network of interviewees was snowballing from party officials that could be reached via academic and think-tank networks. Also, acquaintances among local residents were helpful in first reaching the Beykoz

⁹ Religious orders in Turkey are important organizations that have a considerable impact on politics. They range from Nakshibendi Orders to Nur Orders, for which detailed explanation can be found in the Appendix (Cakir 1990). The Nur Orders were founded under the leadership of Said-i Nursi, a religious leader that wrote the extensive Risale books on Islam. Gulen community branched out from the Nur movement, with the rise of Fethullah Gulen as a prominent religious leader. Gulen has been known to follow a non-confrontational approach with the state, and has chosen to take bureaucratic posts to create internal transformation. (Turam 2007). Gulen and AKP had a strong coalition, which later turned into a power struggle and a full-fledged repression of the movement especially after 2013.

municipality. At the end of each interview, by requesting contacts that could be helpful in further research, combined with the list of groups formed prior to field research, the network of potential interviewees include almost 100 people. Having reached contacts from different groups organized around the Islamic social movement and the party, once insights proved to be repetitive, the conclusion was reached that the objectives of the field research had been fulfilled. The interviewees were helpful in facilitating contacts with others within their personal networks. This process was undertaken professionally, with a structured set of questions, and additional sections tailored for different groups from the SP, AKP, members of the Milli Gorus movement, Islamic civil society, municipalities, intellectuals, and economic actors. The principle of being objective was observed by the research, most importantly, to encourage the interviewees to openly discuss their political history, their experience in or with the party, and their perspective on how the transformation occurred. After the questions were completed, this was followed by an open discussion. These flexible discussions provided valuable insights about the dynamics of party change not anticipated by the researcher or the literature.

On top of the field interviews, interviews conducted by journalists and documentary filmmakers as well as statements made by other important actors have been analyzed. The analysis of party programs, party congresses, and public opinion polls, as well as participant observation at meetings and conferences, were also conducted.

This dissertation utilizes process-tracing, which is “a procedure for identifying steps in a causal process leading to the outcome of a given dependent variable of a particular case in a particular historical context” (George and Bennett 2005, 176). As

Tarrow states, the aim of process tracing is to “connect the phases of the policy process and enable the investigator to identify the reasons for the emergence of a particular decision through the dynamic of events” (Tarrow 1995, 472). “The process-tracing method attempts to identify the intervening causal process - the causal chain and causal mechanism - between an independent variable (or variables) and the outcome of the dependent variable” (George and Bennett 2005, 206). “Process-tracing is an indispensable tool for theory testing and theory development not only because it generated numerous observations within a case, but also because these observations must be linked in particular ways to constitute an explanation of the case. It is the very lack of independence among these observations that makes them a powerful tool for inference” (George and Bennett 2005, 207).

An in-depth case study provides an opportunity to analyze factors that may not be apparent in multiple-case comparative studies. Also, several observations can be included in single case studies, which allow the researcher to account for several potential explanations (George and Bennett 2005, 32). Since this project focuses on the examination of a single longitudinal case, it may “provide a control for many factors,” as systematic analysis of alternative explanations aims to “isolate the difference in the observed outcomes as due to the influence of variance in the single independent variable” (George and Bennett 2005, 81). Furthermore, through in-depth analysis, the researcher can “measure variables in light of the broader context of each particular case, thereby achieving a higher level of conceptual and measurement validity than is ever possible when a large number of cases are selected” (Mahoney and Rueschemeyer 2003, 13).

Close examination of the transformation of the Islamic political party pointed to a critical juncture that had a decisive impact on the causal process. Because it brought to the surface the division between two major camps inside the Islamic political party, the February 28 process was a critical juncture in the evolution of the Islamic movement in Turkey. Ruth Berins Collier and Paul Collier define a critical juncture as “a period of significant change, which typically occurs in distinct ways in different countries and which is hypothesized to produce distinct legacies” (1991, 29). By creating new dynamics for the political actors, this external shock changed the course of events and led to important changes in the party transformation process.

This dissertation demonstrates that an external shock changed the internal dynamics of the Islamic political party to determine the outcome of a power struggle for leadership. This process strengthened Erdogan as the leader of the reformists. Shifting alliances between economic and civil society actors and the reformists constituted a broad coalition that led to the foundation of the AKP.

Organization

This dissertation states that the story of transformation is a complex process whereby actors in the political party and interest groups are intertwined with external dynamics. Following insights from the literature, this dissertation aims to expand the understanding of the phenomenon of party transformation.

The next chapter reviews the literature on the transformation of political parties and Islamic political actors, situating the Islamic political party in Turkey in this debate. The following two chapters describe the puzzle of transformation from the RP to the

AKP, and the antecedent conditions that set the background for political action. The fifth chapter outlines the history of the Islamic political movement in Turkey and the formation and development of the Islamic political party. Chapter 6 elaborates on the antecedent conditions that enabled the transformation. The chapter on the early signs of fragmentation in the RP, and the journey of Erdogan to his dominant leadership position, follows. It concludes with the analysis of the February 28 military intervention as a critical juncture and its impact on the Islamic political party in Turkey.

THEORIES OF PARTY TRANSFORMATION

The transformation of political parties is a rich subject in the political science literature. The transformation of radical parties into moderate ones, parties becoming system actors, ideological change, and the formation and transition between different kinds of parties are some of the issues that have been dealt with across a broad geographic span. While the political party literature has primarily focused on Western and Latin American parties, examination of the Turkish case indicates that this literature is quite relevant to an understanding the dynamics of change within Islamic political parties. Therefore, the analysis of the Turkish case is better situated in this literature.

The literature on Islamic political party transformation provides an important perspective to grasp the regional dynamics and the issues at stake for Islamic political actors as well. However, the literature focuses on mono-causal or insufficient explanations. The interaction among variables, which is key to understanding the Turkish case, has tended to be overlooked.

This chapter explores different theories of transformation both in the broader political party literature and in studies of Islamic political parties, movements and actors. Analysis of the transformation literature provides important insights for understanding the case of the Islamic political party in Turkey.

Political Party Transformation

The literature on political party transformation provides an important framework for the analysis of the Turkish case. Thus, this study contributes to this literature by suggesting another area of application for these theories. While the case under consideration here is the Islamic political party, Turkey is a democratizing state. Therefore, this particular literature provides important insights. Research addressing political parties that are part of a working electoral system and that can participate in the parliament benefits from the analysis of this case.

This section analyzes the role of electoral processes, internal party dynamics, and how and why political parties change behavior. How does ideology play into the behavior of political parties? What conditions and calculations lead them to change their behavior? Political party behavior and how it transforms the political system in which it is situated has been a topic of interest in political science since the 1950s (Downs 1957, Panebianco 1988, Mainwaring 1999, Adams 2001, Levitsky 2003). While part of this literature focuses on spatial competition in the left-right ideological scale to analyze the strategies and ideologies of parties according to how they position themselves relative to other parties on the political spectrum, another way to deal with the issue has been to treat the party as an organization and to analyze party adaptation based on internal and external challenges.

The spatial competition literature looks at where and why parties fall where they do on the ideological continuum from left to right. This literature is limited in scope and misses some important factors for analyzing political party behavior, yet the stress on

ideology is relevant for the Turkish case. The RP was founded as an ideological party, and ideologies determine the framework of party behavior.

The Downsian model analyzes political action in a democratic system based on how much knowledge the party and the voters have about the others' positions and the relative cost of obtaining such information. In the context of limited information, party ideologies help voters manage information. Although every citizen gets one vote, people who command information resources can influence the votes of others. Citizens cast votes based on the ideology and the policies of the party, and the party determines these with the objective of winning the elections and achieving power, prestige, and income (Downs 1957, 137). Yet, once the ideology of a party has been established, parties cannot easily change it without the support of the voters (Downs 1957, 142). Also, parties should differentiate themselves from other parties, and if they move along the left-right spectrum, they cannot move beyond the nearest party. This model suggests that political parties cannot easily move inside the ideological scale due to their commitment to voters.

Building upon this discussion, the hypotheses that can be drawn are:

H1: Party ideology is hard to change and change is dependent on the support of the electorate.

H2: Party ideology is contingent upon the ideologies of the parties in the left-right spectrum.

If these hypotheses were true, the AKP would not be able to separate itself from the ideological RP. Thus, this model is limited in understanding party transformation.

These propositions do not take intra-party power struggles into account, nor do leadership and external factors play a major role in this argument.

By assuming that the party is a unitary actor, Downs focuses solely on the relations between the party and the electorate during electoral periods. Adams proposed a more multifaceted approach by integrating non-policy motivations or biases of voters, such as the role of “party leaders’ images, social-psychological attachments rooted in class, religion, ethnicity” (Adams 2001, 121). Adams’ biased voting model of spatial competition takes into consideration the evolution of party policies over time, and not only during electoral periods. Also, a party can alter where it falls on the ideological continuum in order to gain votes from the electorate by adapting to changes in the political environment, on the condition they do not leapfrog their closest opponent.

H1: Party change is based on electoral calculations.

Adams’ model is helpful in understanding voters’ motivations, capturing a more complete picture of electoral calculations. Electoral calculations are an integral part of party politics, yet it is not sufficient to explain party transformation. However, this approach still does not take into consideration the dynamics in the party and the role of leadership. Since the initial formation of two blocs within the party, the RP’s transformation into the AKP has been significantly impacted by its desire to win the hearts and minds of the electorate. Yet, internal differences of opinion were also very important during this process. Moreover, external factors pushed the party to a crossroad

by exerting pressure on the RP, Erbakan, and the traditional way of making politics, which led members and supporters of the party to re-evaluate their path.

These factors provided the party room for maneuver to change its ideology and step into the sphere of center-right parties. However, in many of the field interviews, the officials of the new party as well as its supporters stressed that they preserved the values of the RP; they only changed their methods of conducting politics. The discourse and proposals of the party changed drastically during the transformation from the RP to the AKP, yet the core social base continued to vote by considering the common values and norms that the party represented. Parties are connected to their grassroots, and their strategic moves are bounded by the demands of the electorate. Hence, the values the AKP represented were preserved, while their interpretation, implementation, and discourse transformed. The party cannot afford to isolate the masses that have been supporting it, and the support of economic and civil society actors strengthened the cause for transformation. As both Downs and Adams argue, parties do not change their ideology to a large extent because out of the fear of losing constituencies and credibility (Downs 1957, Adams 2001). While the AKP deviated greatly from the RP's ideology, it preserved its conservative character.

Party Adaptation

As complex as Adams' theory is in examining the relationship between the party and the electorate and shifts in party ideology, the spatial competition literature remains limited in its scope and does not take into account the internal dynamics of the party. The party adaptation literature, on the other hand, looks at how and why parties adapt to

changes in their external environment by focusing on the organizational aspect of parties. Angelo Panebianco and Steven Levitsky have contributed to this literature extensively with their detailed analyses of party adaptation in the Latin American context (Panebianco 1988, Levitsky 2003).

Panebianco examined the internal challenges to adaptation as well as external conditions, focusing on the institutionalization of the party system. This expanded the party adaptation literature, which until that time had focused on the internal dynamics of the party during times of transition. Levitsky also considered internal and external factors, while pointing out that, depending on the context, institutionalization may manifest differently. In a study co-authored with Katrina Burgess, Levitsky further elaborated on the analyses of party adaptation by looking at why and how longstanding parties can or cannot adapt to changing demands (Burgess and Levitsky 2003).

Panebianco contributed to the study of political parties by further developing the theories of scholars such as Maurice Duverger, who viewed parties as organizations, and by developing a conceptualization of the political party by comparing mass bureaucratic and electoral-professional parties (Duverger 1951). This perspective accounts for the features of the internal party structure, the role of leadership, the organization, and the bureaucratic structure of the party. For instance, Levitsky suggests that if a change occurs in the party's dominant coalition or leadership during an external crisis, reform-oriented leaders have the chance to transform the party (Panebianco 1988, 242-44). Panebianco's account of how critical junctures can stimulate a reformist leader to create a new path for the party sheds light on the experience of the AKP, when Erdogan, the leader of the

reformist wing of the RP, found the environment conducive for expansion strategies as a result of the February 28 critical juncture. This external crisis helped to solidify the reformist wing of the RP and make a change in leadership possible.

According to Panebianco's theory:

H1: External crises create an opportunity to change the dominant coalition in the party, and for reform-oriented leaders to transform the party.

This hypothesis holds in the Turkish case, since the internal power dynamics of the RP changed due to the impact of the military intervention. However, the reformist leader might not have been successful in transforming the party if the external shock did not also alter alliances amongst party supporters.

The party adaptation perspective examines party-electorate relations and party-political system relations, offering a perspective for understanding adaptation by looking at their capacity for reform, how strictly organized the party is, and how deeply it is rooted in society (Levitsky 2003, 13).

Party adaptation provides the most valid account of the transformation of the Islamic political party in Turkey. If these hypotheses are true, these hypotheses for the Turkish case are as follows:

H1: February 28 intervention changes the power dynamics in the RP by pressuring the traditional party clique and creating a space for the reformists.

H2: The political ban on Erbakan strengthened the prospects for the reformist wing in RP.

Levitsky examined the reasons behind the adaptation of the Justicialista Party (PJ) in Argentina to an environment of changing grassroots organization and economic crises. Party adaptation in his definition is the response of the party, whose primary objective is to win elections, to external challenges by undergoing changes in its strategy and structure (Levitsky 2003, 9). Party leaders have to choose a strategy, and then first sell this to the rest of the party, and second to the electorate. The configuration and inclinations of the electorate are crucial for the party that aspires to win elections (Levitsky 2003, 10). The structure of electoral competition, bi-party or multiparty, is another important factor that affects the behavior of parties, since they have to position themselves accordingly.

According to Levitsky's theorization:

H1: Parties respond to external challenges by changing strategy and structure. Party change occurs if the party organization and the electorate support the new strategy.

H2: The structure of electoral competition is determinative of party behavior and change.

In the case of Turkey, the fragmented party structure allowed for party change by providing a flexible political environment and shifts in the relative power of the parties in the system. The right wing, where the Islamic political party is situated, has undergone changes since the foundation of the first party at this end of the spectrum, the Democratic Party, in 1946. The party system allowed for the AKP to change the balance of power from failed right-wing parties to the coalition it formed to win the majority of votes in the 2002 national elections.

The level of institutionalism of the party and the party system has been an important factor in the analyses conducted by scholars such as Panebianco and Mainwaring. According to Mainwaring, comparative stability in the patterns of party competition and strong roots in the society are determinants of party-system institutionalization, which is an important factor in analyzing party systems (1999, 107-108). The regime is more stable when the party system is more institutionalized, ideological positions do not fluctuate, parties have strong roots in society, and parties are considered the legitimate vehicles for conducting politics (Mainwaring 1999, 26-27). In weakly institutionalized systems, populism and anti-politics are more common (Mainwaring 1999, 325).

H1: The party system is determined by party change.

Levitsky states if a party integrates into the everyday activities of its members, “through the sponsorship of unions, youth and women’s branches, sports clubs, cooperatives, and other organizations,” it is more likely for party members to cling to their party loyalty during a time of party transformation (Levitsky 2003, 13).

H1: The more the everyday life of the party electorate is integrated into the party, the more likely party members will support party transformation.

If this hypothesis holds true, the party electorate would support transformation. This is the case for the transformation of the Islamic political party in Turkey. The party

had close relations with the electorate. Visits to homes and close contact with potential members of the electorate was an important aspect of Erdogan's leadership. For instance, the Anatolian bourgeoisie and the party supported each other from foundation. Erdogan was the leader of the reformist bloc, and the electorate closely connected with and followed the new path of the party.

However, external pressure may shift loyalties due to the increasing cost of clinging to the present dynamics.

H2: External pressure has an impact on party loyalty.

This hypothesis also works, for when the RP policy started to hurt their interests, Islamic economic actors shifted their loyalty to the reformist leader and distanced themselves from the radical politics of the RP.

On the other hand, by way of analyzing mass populist party adaptation in Argentina, Peru, Mexico and Venezuela while conducting reforms to integrate into the neoliberal economy, Burgess and Levitsky concluded that internally fluid party structures possess greater adaptive capacity than highly bureaucratic ones, which can block or override executive initiatives. Therefore, the level of institutionalism in the party may be a determinant factor in party transformation. In their two-level framework, external incentives and organizational capacity based on the autonomy of the decision makers from "party authorities and affiliated unions" lead to success or failure in adaptation. These parties could "replace union-based linkages with ties to other subaltern groups,

such as informal sector workers and urban popular organizations, they are more likely to rely increasingly on a mix of clientelistic and media-based linkages” (Burgess and Levitsky 2003, 907).

H1: The more institutionalized a party is, the less it will adapt to changes.

H2: Clientelistic linkages with the electoral bases can ease party adaptation.

Hunter studied the Workers’ Party in Brazil (*Partido dos Trabalhadores*, PT) as a case of transformation (2010). Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, having changed his radical rhetoric and program, won the presidential elections in 2002 for the first time. As Hunter suggests, over time, the party “grew to look more like its catchall or electoral-professional competitors” (2010, 2). The party had a hard time propagating its socialist agenda with Brazil’s new market reforms and support from the constituencies. According to Hunter, the goal of vote maximization rendered this agenda unattainable. Since the ranks of the party remained cohesive and committed to their initial agenda, the ideational adaptation did not occur completely. Although PT was “an unlikely candidate for adaptation,” it did adapt (Hunter 2010, 3). Hunter explains this party adaptation with two major factors: the external environment (Brazilian institutions, the structure of electoral competition, and changes in the international economy) and the popular and strong leader, Lula (Hunter 2010, 3). Using a historical institutionalism approach, Hunter describes the model she uses as institutional layering, or “gradual change that results eventually in significant transformation” (Hunter 2010, 8).

H1: The external environment and a strong leader can produce party adaptation.

Hunter's analysis provides valuable insights for the Turkish case. The most important contribution of this study is the leadership factor, which has not been accounted for as an important factor in the analyses of the Turkish case. Although the social bases of the RP wanted a new direction in politics, Erdogan was crucial in changing their position on foreign policy and economic relations.

Kumbaracibasi analyzed the institutionalization of the AKP as a political party by focusing mainly on the theories of Panebianco (2009). Kumbaracibasi proposes that "Managing the transition from a 'policy-seeking' non-governmental party or social movement to being a party in public office that has to balance its original (and often radical) policy goals with the demands and strains of government" (2009, 3).

Kumbaracibasi criticizes Panebianco and argues that the main dimensions of party institutionalization, autonomy and systemness "may not always be related to each other in a positive correlation; they may in fact, require political leaders to trade off one dimension against the other and lead to difficult strategic choices" (Kumbaracibasi 2009, 6).

Kumbaracibasi looked at the degree of institutionalization in reference to the party's autonomy and system-ness, and claims that the AKP has to continually balance these two dimensions. Therefore, the relations with the leader, the party's autonomy, as well as the receptiveness of their constituencies' demands are important policy considerations. The author suggests the concept *heresthetic*, as the "strategic political

leaders' attempts to overcome disadvantageous situations by manipulating the political agenda and moving the political conflict to policy areas in which they can win without necessarily changing people's underlying preferences." Stressing role of party organizations, and the internal organizational characteristics, an electoral-professional party has to keep the interests of its supporters in mind, which narrows room for maneuver within the party. On the other hand, if a party is more institutionalized, the leader has more autonomy (Kumbaracibasi 2009, 4). This study is important in understanding the institutional dynamics of the party and the management of the social demands by the party ranks and leadership.

This discussion underlines both the internal dynamics of the political parties and the opportunities that an external shock might present. The hypotheses drawn from Panebianco's, Levitsky's, and Hunter's theories have explanatory power for the Turkish case. The creation of opportunities by external crises, changes in internal dynamics, the importance of electorate support in party adaptation, and the role of leadership are some of the insights from this literature utilized in this analysis, which are crucial factors in understanding the Islamic political party in Turkey.

Transformation of the Islamic Political Parties

The political party literature provides important insights on understanding political change. While benefiting from these debates, research on Islamic political parties is also crucial for situating the analysis of the transformation of the Islamic political party in Turkey. Yet, limiting this research to the study of Islamic political parties inhibits accounting for factors such as internal party dynamics, leadership, and the

role of external shock, which are fundamental for demonstrating the dynamics of political party transformation in Turkey. While the sole focus on Central America, Europe, and Latin America biases the political party literature, this research posits that the analyses of Islamic political parties can benefit from this literature. The historical experiences of Islamic politics are different, and relations between state, democracy, and political actors take place in a different context. Looking at change in authoritarian and semi-authoritarian regimes requires that attention be paid to different dynamics, such as the role of participation, state repression, and the shaky character of democracies or democratic practices. Turkey's democracy is a work in progress with authoritarian tendencies. Therefore, it is important to take these factors into account. Nevertheless, political parties that participate in elections and become a part of the parliament share many things in common with cases in the broader political party literature.

It is important to look more deeply at the regional dynamics to better situate the debate. Islamist movements are important political actors who have challenged mainstream democratization debates.¹⁰ Under authoritarian regimes, these movements have continued to exist. The Iranian Revolution was important in fostering the psyche of Islamic political actors in Turkey, igniting within them dreams of a different system. The Islamists in Turkey, as well as their counterparts, have since transformed. Beginning in the 1990s, Islamist political actors started to question their main premises and reconsider the ways in which they participate in politics.

¹⁰ According to the results of the studies described in the *Sacred and Secular: Religion and Politics Worldwide*, "The world as a whole now has more people with traditional religious views than ever before – and they constitute a growing proportion of the world's population." (Inglehart and Norris, 2011, 5)

The cases of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, the Islamic Action Front in Jordan, and the Party for Justice and Development in Morocco are all examples of political actors who conducted politics in new ways (Ayoob 2008, Nasr 1997, Wickham 2004, Schwedler 2006, Wickham 2013). The transformation of Islamist political actors led to new questions about the role of Islam in politics. Until the Arab Uprisings, due to restrictions on participation in the political arena, the role of Islamist political actors has been limited. Nonetheless, these actors possess considerable power and spheres of influence.

The objectives, ideologies, strategies, and agenda of the Islamist political actors vary and are shaped by such factors as ideological roots, regime type, and international context. The type of shift in political party behavior that is the focus of this study is the tendency of ideologically-confined actors to be more accommodating to various social and political actors that are outside of their initial societal imaginary. The focus is on the potential for change in the Islamic political actors seeking to form an Islamic society, either through state mechanisms or gradual everyday changes. Whether these actors choose to accept a more pluralist society, and, ultimately, a democratic order, is examined. These processes have been conceptualized as moderation. Moderation, however, suggests a linear change. Yet, these processes are complex, involving various actors and external factors. Moderation does not suggest democratization, nor does it imply complete or irreversible change. It remains limited and is hard to operationalize to such a complex phenomenon. Therefore, it is not useful in this case.

To delve into the debate in the Islamic political party literature, moderation will be used here simply to refer to political actors that become part of the system. The literature also suggests that these processes are complex. It is helpful to differentiate between different potential paths to moderation. One is behavioral, which refers to strategic change (Schwedler 2007, Wickham 2004), as when the political actor plays by the rules of the political game in town. Schwedler points to a common bias in the literature, which conceptualizes moderates as actors who “don’t rock the boat” and do not contest the power and position of the current elites (2011, 350). This argument underlines the desire for the Islamists to be absorbed into the system, so they would be willing to be part of the world’s political and economic system. Moderation can also be ideological, which refers to a more elaborate moderation. The Turkish case moves beyond the tactical phase; yet, how much transformation occurs ideologically is underspecified.

Although the context and conditions are quite different, the experience of the broader ecology of the Islamic political actors provides insight into the Turkish experience. Additionally, it is important to situate this debate within the transformation of political parties in general—mainly, the radical political actors in Europe and Latin America—thereby utilizing a broader perspective by way of surveying cases beyond the MENA region.

The political environment, political institutions, internal dynamics, civil society, voting behavior of the constituency, and economic actors are possible explanatory factors in the transformation of the Islamic political party. The party system, political context,

political opportunity structure, state repression, and institutionalization form the conditions that may or may not allow for party change to occur.

This section analyzes four different perspectives that explain Islamic political party transformation: inclusion, repression, learning, and economic actors. A review of the existing literature seeking to explain shifts in Islamist party behavior across a wide range of countries, including Yemen, Jordan, Egypt, and Turkey, suggests that we may consider four possible explanations for such transformations: inclusion, repression, learning and political economy (Schwedler 2006, Wickham 2013, Nasr 2005, Tugal 2009, Cizre 2007, Gumuscu 2010).

The possibility for Islamist political actors to democratize or operate in the international context by abiding by its norms, values, and standards has led to analyses that question whether the Islamist actors are shifting gears towards the center right of the political spectrum, while showing willingness to negotiate with other political actors and accept the supremacy of the rule of secular law (Schwedler 2006, Wickham 2004). Following Huntington, the purpose of participating in the social, economic, and political institutions has been looked at as a way to “abandon violence and any commitment to revolution” (Huntington, 1991, 170). Inclusion and repression focus on the impact of the institutional factors, learning focuses on the internal changes in the party, and political economy looks at the economic system and business actors.

Inclusion

In explaining Islamic political party transformation, inclusion suggests that the participation of a radical political party in competitive elections and multi-party politics

leads to an increasing desire to act inside the framework of the political system to bring about change in the political, social and economic system. By way of participating in electoral processes, the party learns to function as a part of the political system (Nasr 2005, 17-19; Schwedler 2006, 11; Cavdar 2006, 480). Nasr (2005), focusing on structural factors, proposed that the transformation of a political party is related to its participation in multiparty politics, exposure to repression by a strong military, and the presence of actors that operate in free market economies.

Muslim democrats are pragmatic, do not use democracy as a tactic, and do not try to inject Islam into politics (Nasr 2005, 13). Nasr identifies three conditions that need to be present for the rise of Muslim democracy. The first is that the country should have experienced a military intervention in politics, and after the military “formally withdrew from politics,” it remained an influential actor. For Nasr, this is an important factor because it creates boundaries on Islamic politics: It creates incentives for the Islamists to pursue other means of integrating into democratic politics, forcing them to experiment with different coalitions. However, Nasr ignores the fact that these boundaries may be subject to change. The second factor is a strong and globally-integrated private sector. Nasr offers economic liberalization in Turkey, Indonesia, and Malaysia as related examples. The third factor is the presence of competitive elections and multiparty politics (Nasr 2005, 17-19). “The rise of Muslim Democracy suggests that –the values of Muslims which are not to be confused with the demands of Islamists –can interact with practical election strategies to play the main role in shaping political ideas and driving voter behavior” (Nasr 2005, 20).

Schwedler analyzed the impact of inclusion into political institutions, questioning whether it led to moderation, which she defined as “the movement from a relatively closed and rigid worldview to a more open and tolerant of alternative perspectives” by comparing the cases of Jordan and Yemen (Schwedler 2006, 3). Schwedler compares Jordan’s Islamic Action Front Party (IAF) and the Yemeni Congregation for Reform (Islah) and questions the impact of inclusion in the electoral processes on creating change in the political party’s ideology (Schwedler 2006, 80). Analyzing the role of democratic openings in the political system in causing internal transformation of political parties, Schwedler examined shifts in the electoral system, the internal organization of her cases, IAF and Islah, and their practice of incorporating new practices into the party’s ideology (Schwedler 2006, 85, 148). Since IAF embraced more pluralist policies and became congruent with the political system over time, whereas Islah Party did not, Schwedler concluded that what made the difference in the transformation of IAF and Islah were differences in the monopoly of the power of the regime and the opportunity space left for the parties as well as the parties’ internal cohesion (Schwedler 2006, 194-197). Therefore, this analysis did not prove the argument that inclusion into the political system leads to moderation in the party’s ideology. In the case of Jordan, the Kingdom controlled the boundaries of political contestation by keeping the parliament under control and dismissing it periodically. The King used the Parliament as an instrument to contain the opposition, with measures that included holding elections and convening the Parliament at strategic times, such as during large-scale economic protests, and dissolving the Parliament at other times (Schwedler 2006, 48). An unintended consequence of these

processes was for the IAF to gain experience in multi-party politics. Yemen, on the other hand, had no prior experience before the unification of South and North Yemen in 1990 (Schwedler 2006, 60). On top of this lack of experience, Islah's fragmented party structure hindered the formation of a unified ideological perspective, which acted as an obstacle for party transformation (Schwedler 2006, 194-197).

Berna Turam suggests that Islamist actors, particularly the Gulen movement, which can also be defined as a civil society actor, have become more moderate as they struggle to participate in a system strictly controlled by Kemalist forces (2007). Turam argues that "everyday sites have offered a temporary alternative mechanism of interaction" between the Islamic movement and the Kemalist state," which opened more channels of interaction and reduced competition between the state and the Islamist groups (Turam 2007, 156).

The inclusion of radical political actors in the political system has been investigated as a possible factor in the softening of the ideological premises of political actors in the experiences of the Labor Party in England and communist parties in Europe and Latin America. Sheri Berman argues that participating in elections creates a new concern for radical actors to increase their popularity and gain votes in order to have a stronger say in the system. Once in the formal game, these actors have to institutionalize and become part of the system. Also, since the actors need to deal with people's daily issues, ideology meets worldly issues (Berman 2008).

Sheri Berman revisits radical political actors in Europe in order to reflect on cases in the Middle East. Berman describes two different approaches to the issue: pessimistic

and optimistic. While the former does not think radical political actors in the Middle East would transform over time, the latter points to the importance of the political context and believes that participating in democratic institutions would change the behavior of the political actors (Berman 2008).

Berman categorizes the arguments of the optimists into three types. The first category adopts the theorization of Anthony Downs. According to this, being in the electoral game forces political actors to appeal to a larger electorate and abandon policies directed toward a narrow and extremist electoral base. The second category follows Robert Michels and focuses on the dynamics created by institutionalization. According to this perspective, once radical political actors take part in the legal-political game, the institutions they build take their energy away from underground activities. Also, in order for the institution to function, they need to set aside ideology and make day-to-day, practical decisions. The third category is what Berman calls the *pothole theory of democracy* (Berman 2008).

The German Nazis and Italian Fascists are cases where the pessimists' arguments did not hold. Berman draws a parallel between the communist parties in Europe and Islamist movements, since both have strong ideologies, want to overthrow the existing order, and are connected to an international movement. Berman suggests that these cases provide various implications. As long as there are strong democratic institutions, the political context did have an impact and the actors transformed. However, in weak democracies, the ultimate aims of the actors were left unchallenged. Berman concludes: “..it is therefore not the presence of a democratic state that matters, but rather its strength”

(2008, 16). Berman also points out that the existence of a strong opposition and absence of major problems, such as poor economic conditions, weaken the radical actors' power and ability to mobilize, pushing them to integrate into the system.

The experience of communist parties also adds support to the inclusion hypothesis. Whether the party participates in the system to overturn it or transforms ideologically depends on external factors, such as the structure of the political system. Trying to become a part of the economic system and keep up with new conditions is also important for political actors, which might lead to intra-party conflicts.

In the case of Turkey, the Islamic political party has been participating in the institutions of the parliamentary system since its foundation, although there have been disruptions. Following Schwedler, the experience of the party may be a positive factor contributing to institutionalization. Institutionalization works in favor of the party to potentially form a unified ideological perspective. However, this does not explain the mechanisms of transformation. The factors behind the transition from the RP to the AKP are more complex. For instance, there is one important additional factor: leadership. Erbakan, as the leader of the party, was crucial in the formation of the ideology of the party and in mobilizing the party base. Also, it is possible that not only the experience of inclusion, but also the experience of repression, had an impact on the path the party embraced. Therefore, while accepting the impact of inclusion in the political system and the underlying importance of operating in a political system that allows elections and provides opportunities to compete for office, this is a necessary factor, but is not explanatory by itself.

If the inclusion moderation explained the transformation of the Islamic political party, we would expect:

H1: The Islamic political party that participates in the elections will become a central political party.

H2: Participation in the elections will suppress the radical ideological tendencies of the Islamic political party.

In the case of Turkey, if inclusion-moderation were operational in the transformation of the Islamic political party, the Islamic political party would de-radicalize by participation in elections in 1970, 1973-4, 1977, 1987, 1991, 1995, and 1999. Since the party has been participating in elections since its foundation, this argument is not sufficient to explain the centralization. Also, the RP was an ideological, more radical party and inclusion did not lead it down a different path. Despite the fact that the party had been in politics for 30 years, it transformed in 2001.

Repression

Carrie Wickham brings in another dimension to the discussion on political structure, underlining the role of repression in the moderation of Islamist parties. In her article on the Wasat Party in Egypt, Wickham analyzes the formation of the moderate Wasat Party that deviated from its Muslim Brotherhood roots. She argues that even in a political arena where participation is constrained and Islamic groups are not allowed to enter the parliament as a party, the combination of repression and opportunities leads the Islamist group to evolve through learning via interaction with other political actors (Wickham 2004, 207, 223).

Shadi Hamid (2014) provides a discussion of the Muslim Brotherhood and points to the role of state pressure on the moderation of the movement. Following the repression in the 1990s, the movement adopted a revised understanding of Islam, focusing on respect for plurality. This was reflected in the internal organization as well. However, this stance of the movement, which was growing in importance as the provider of social services, alarmed the Egyptian government further, which led to the Arab Uprisings. In a society where the majority favors Islamic political movements, the democratic process was accommodating to their interests. Along similar lines, Nathan Brown, who also analyzed the Brotherhood, stressed the importance of being a governing party on the dynamics of political party change (2012). The toppling of the government has interfered in the process, and it remains to be seen how the movement will transform.

Turkey has been a multi-party democracy since the 1950 elections, yet the political system has been disrupted numerous times by military coups. The banning of political parties has also been a relatively common practice, especially against the Islamic and Kurdish parties. Therefore, changes in the political system can explain the changing outlook of the Islamic party. Nonetheless, the repression thesis, which assumes that political actors will be tamed with the stick of state institutions, should not be taken for granted. Neither inclusion into the system or a ban on the political activity of parties or members has sufficient explanatory power. For political actors to have a stake in shaping the government structures and social institutions, inclusion into the power structure is crucial, and repression refers to a ban on their political activity. As Gumuscu argues, keeping the political actors outside of the political game does not necessarily have a

moderating impact. In fact, the direction of the impact is indeterminate (Gumuscu 2010).

It is possible that repression leads a political actor to adopt a more radical stance.

Although Wickham's argument is more nuanced, the combination of repression and inclusion does not explain the RP case either, since the party has experienced repression from its first experiences in politics onward.

The February 28 process is more determinative and constitutes a breaking point for the RP. Compared to the other bans on the party and military interventions in politics, this process was directed squarely towards the Islamic political actors. In fact, it not only focused on these actors, but spread to economic actors and the sphere of education. However, this process by itself is not explanatory; it acted as a catalyzer to solidify fragmentation in the party. The internal dynamics are determinative along with the shifting electoral bases, as well as the opportunity to institutionalize a new party under one roof because of the presence of a strong alternative leader. If internal fragmentation had not started earlier, and different constituent groups had not pushed for a shift, this process may not have resulted in party transformation. To survive under the political conditions of repression, the party could go through behavioral change, yet it is not certain whether this is solely a tactical or an internal transformation.

Learning

Another explanation for Islamic political party transformation focuses on the process of learning. This argument suggests that participation in the political structures leads to reflection in the self-identification and ideology of party. Hakan Yavuz argues that the political processes lead to change by the party's "learning and internalizing democratic

values and norms” (2009, 10). Analogous to this perspective, Mohammed Ayooob states that in his case studies, Islamic parties, or repressed parties, moved from “the tactical stage to a more genuine appreciation of the democratic system,” since they come to understand that this is the best way to articulate their political views and not face repression (Ayooob 2008, 94).

From the learning perspective, the following hypotheses can be drawn:

H1: Islamic parties that participate in the democratic system democratize over time.

H2: Democratic systems benefit Islamic parties.

Following the learning argument, Umit Cizre defines the AKP’s identity as based on a “new understanding of Westernization, secularism, democracy and the role and relevance of Islam in politics” (2008). Cizre argues that the transformation of the AKP is an identity question and that “the commitment to transform Turkey’s political landscape was also part of an engagement to transform the identity of the party” (2008, 3). In this way, the party gained greater support from its constituencies, which would not be possible had it retained the Milli Gorus identity (Cizre 2008, 3). Cizre explains this shift as “the product of a harsh learning curve,” since the RP legacy blocked the party’s road to success (Cizre 2008, 4).

Learning in itself leans towards the definition of the transformation as ideological, referring to a deeper change. Understanding ideological transformation requires continuous, long-term observation of the party. Since the AKP has been the ruling party for the last 14 years, the Turkish case presents such an opportunity. Holding office as the

only political party, and having acquired control over all levels of state institutions, with a non-functioning checks and balances system, sufficient information has been generated on the level of the party's transformation. Over the years, the AKP's power as the representative of the state has become more concentrated, and, through education and the practices of the Diyanet, it has utilized the state as an institution to mold its ideal type of society.

There have been considerable changes in the behavior of the party that reflect its relationship with the system. The party has changed how it positions its values in politics. A Sharia-based state is no longer a question. However, when analyzed closely, some of these changes merely represent a different way of conducting politics rather than a signifier of ideological transformation. The most important piece of evidence on this matter is the unwillingness of the party to create a pluralist democracy and its recurring stress on majoritarian democracy.

Yildiz Atasoy explains the transformation as a targeting of society instead of the state, or a practice of new Islamism. The author contends that the AKP ceased to pursue the objective of Islamization of the state and began to search for a small state that would only secure basic rights and liberties, rather than impose an ideology on the society (Atasoy 2005, 46). This argument is true but incomplete. The creation of a small state does not necessarily lead to a more liberal society. The field interviews suggest that the stress on a small state is connected to the party's majoritarian understanding of democracy. Since the majority determines the type of government, the smaller the state the more that different groups in society can make their own decisions. This brings back

the discussion of plurality in the legal system, and points to the application of different sets of law for members of different religions. Therefore, this small state does not specify the rights of minorities and nonbelievers.

In her analysis of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, Wickham provides a more sophisticated account of learning. The study sheds light on Jordan, Kuwait, and Morocco, and defines the Islamic movements in these countries as followers of Sunni revivalist Islam (2013, 3). Wickham discusses the role of external factors, and her explanation lies in the internal transformation of the political party. This study demonstrated that political inclusion does not necessarily create a linear path of integrating into democratic, liberal politics (Wickham 2013). The author's concept of "Islamist auto-reform" refers to a "reform of the self" towards procedural democracy, pluralism, and citizenship rights within a religious framework.

There are two main arguments of this study: (1) the Islamist groups analyzed are not homogenous and monolithic, as they have internal differences of opinion; and (2) the changes that the movements go through cannot be described as linear progress towards moderation. While the political actors in these cases are rational and aspire to participate in politics by making adjustments to their discourse and agenda, this does not immediately make them democratic actors. While participation in the system and playing by its rules does not necessarily equate with ideological change, the formation of new coalitions and relationships with different actors can lead to changes in the mindset of individual members and, thus, stimulate auto-reform (Wickham 2013, 13). While these

actors might not have changed their objective of Islamic rule, how they define Islamic rule changes over time (Wickham 2013, 14).

Wickham suggests that during critical junctures, such as the opening of a political regime to competition, internal debates arise that require the leader to make decisions. Once a new course of action is chosen, such as participating in elections, the movement starts to interact with new actors. “As Islamist actors have assumed new roles and responsibilities, it can be theorized that they have developed new competencies and skills and adapted their behavior to the norms and expectations of the institutions of which they are a part” (Wickham 2013, 12). On the other hand, state repression decreases the willingness and ability of the movement to organize masses around a radical ideology. Wickham claims that intellectuals are also transformed through interaction with actors who utilize the discourse of human rights and democracy. The transformations of these actors has an overall impact on the organization.

The theorization of Islamist auto-reform has explanatory power for the Turkish case. The internal debates, role of repression, learning through interaction with other political actors, and self-transformation are relevant for the discussion of the RP and AKP. However, the process unfolds in a different way: repression was influential because there was already a split in the party, and the presence of the leader of one of these factions led to the transformation.

Some of the articles in Cizre’s edited volume also focus on the RP-AKP differences, and mainly on external factors, particularly the state. For instance, Duran and Cinar base their arguments on the Islamists’ relationship with the state, which they define

as pragmatic and patient. When the secular state and they propose that Islamists try to create openings to participate in the system, and when there are limits, they do not resort to violence, but accommodate (2008, 24). However, this does not explain why there is a difference in the politics and discourse of the AKP and the RP.

Political Economy

The economic context in which political parties operate and the economic actors who make up their potential electoral base are additional factors that explain the moderating tendencies of Islamic political parties. The changing landscape of political economy through market reforms and its effects on the transformation of political actors have been analyzed extensively (Tugal 2009, Gumuscu 2010, Yavuz 2003, Atasoy 2005, Nasr 2005, Gulalp 2003). The political economic approach examines the relationship between changing local and global political economic structures, socio-economic classes, and political actors. These shifting structures and relationships can influence the political stance of the social movements by affecting the interest structure of the actors within the movement. Moreover, the political economic transformation can overturn the dynamics between political elites and rising economic actors. Scholars who adopt this approach posit that the growing wealth of the bourgeoisie brings about the opportunity for them to exert pressure on the political elites. The increasingly globalizing bourgeoisie prefer a stable economy to protect their assets, which requires a governing party that is not repressed by the military, and a system party that provides economic stability without threatening the regime.

The hypothesis for this explanation can be stated as:

H1: Globalizing and wealthier bourgeoisie prefers system parties and exerts pressure on political elites to create change.

The Turkish case offers important insights into this argument. The more RP contended the regime, the harder it became to preserve power and hold office, which unsettled the economic actors. Therefore, while this hypothesis holds in the RP case, it is not sufficient.

The values and interests of a growing Islamic bourgeoisie, which have become more incorporated into the dynamics of the world economy, are transforming as a corollary to the changing political economic landscapes. This leads to more integration with the secular system, since challenging it becomes increasingly costly. In the case of Turkey, the costs were concrete for the Islamic businessmen. Omer Bolat, who was the president of MUSIAD in 2005, stated that during the February 28 period, they lost 200 billion dollars.¹¹

Nasr argues that the flourishing business sectors in the 1990s in Turkey, Indonesia, and Malaysia were crucial factors that led to party transformation in those countries (Nasr 2005, 19). The globally-integrated, strong private sectors in these cases was an influential actor that carved out new ways of organizing the Islamist party, which, in turn, placed a strong emphasis on economic liberalization. In their respective studies, Hakan Yavuz, Haldun Gulalp, and Yildiz Atasoy stress the structural changes induced by

¹¹ Eylem Turk. 29 April 2005. Milliyet. <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/2005/04/29/business/abus.html>
MUSIAD is the association of the Muslim businessmen.

economic liberalization in Turkey, beginning in the 1980s. For them, the transformation towards an export-oriented economy that is integrated with global capitalism created a new, conservative bourgeoisie that thrived on small- and medium-sized enterprises in Anatolia (Yavuz 2003, Gulalp 2003, Atasoy 2005).¹²

Gumuscu provides an important account on the impact of economic liberalization on the transformation of the RP (2008). Gumuscu suggests that economic liberalization has created a “rising devout bourgeoisie” in Turkey that rooted for a “democratic conservative party.” This class of emerging businessmen supported the fragmentation of the Islamist party and accelerated the formation of the AKP by broadening its base of support. In Egypt, on the other hand, because the economic policies harmed the lower middle class and did not create a strong pragmatic stance amongst the Islamists, economic liberalization did not lead to moderation (Gumuscu 2008).

Thus, the ascending Islamic bourgeoisie was a prominent factor in the transformation of the Islamic party, due to its own stakes in a globally-integrated Turkey, which became closer to the European markets with the rise of the AKP. Cihan Tugal suggests that this transformation can actually be seen as the appropriation or expulsion of the anti-capitalist segments of the Islamist movement by the capitalist hegemony. Therefore, it is not only a transformation towards a pluralist, rights-based, and culturally Islamist politics driven by a globally integrated Islamic bourgeoisie, but also a process in

¹² Also analyzed by Ayse Bugra in 1998 “Class, Culture, and State: An Analysis of Interest Representation by Two Turkish Business Associations” *International Journal of Middle East Studies*. 30 (4): 521-539, E. Fuat Keyman and Berrin Koyuncu in 2005 “Globalization, Alternative Modernities and the Political Economy of Turkey”. *Review of International Political Economy*, 12 (1): 105-128, and numerous articles by Ziya Onis.

which the capitalist hegemony is reinforced, as one of the dissident lines is obliterated. Hence, Tugal claims that “the meaning of Islam is always remaking itself through the conflict of materially situated actors” (2002, 107). Yavuz espouses a similar view when he characterizes the transformation as “God [being] reinvented for the needs of the capitalist market” (2003, 98). While the political economic approach accounts for elements of society, such as social structures and classes, it remains confined to the domain of social and political elites.

Tugal explains the changes in the Islamist mobilization in Turkey through a comparative ethnographic study of Sultanbeyli conducted in 2000-2002, when he lived and worked in the district as a teacher, then compares this data with observations and interviews from 2006. He defines the district as a site for “Islamic purification and redistribution” (Tugal 2009, 11). The people interviewed by Tugal were radical Islamists, municipal employees, and party members of the RP and the AKP. The author conducted follow-up interviews with some of the same people, demonstrating that there have been moderation tendencies in radical groups that used to aspire for a Shariah state, were anti-capitalist and anti-Western, and were active in pushing for religious rules in the public sphere (Tugal 2009, 46-56).

In order to explain these changes in radical Islamists, Tugal suggests that a passive revolution in the Islamic political party transpired: “one of the convoluted, and sometimes unintended, ways by which the dominant sectors establish willing consent (‘hegemony’) for their rule” (2009, 3-4). The absorption of radicals into the party was induced by the leadership of Tayyip Erdogan, the professionalization of the practices of

the local and national government, a balanced foreign policy that fostered globalism while strengthening nationalism, and the re-establishment of the modern space (Tugal 2009, 7). His ethnographic study of the rise of a counter-hegemonic civil society constituted through new social forms of everyday practices and their re-incorporation to the system during the AKP era offers valuable insights. Tugal exclusively focuses on the most radical sectors of the movement, located in the Sultanbeyli district. However, it is also important to look at transformations in the more moderate segments of the movement to understand the changes in the political party from the RP to the AKP.

The shortcoming of this perspective comes from its narrow focus on one factor. The complex processes behind political party change cannot be reduced to the impact of one actor on the electoral base. The economic structure and actors are essential for policy making and integral to the political structure. These make up, however, just one factor among many in interaction with increasing apprehension inside the party and rising support for Erdogan, that contributed to the transformation.

Argument

In order to fully grasp and analyze the transformation of the AKP in Turkey in the larger context of the transformation of political parties, a comprehensive approach that examines the processes and mechanisms behind this change is needed. The Islamist political party change literature in particular does not sufficiently capture the dynamics at play in the Turkish case. The political party adaptation literature, on the other hand, is useful in analyzing and explaining the various factors involved in the mechanism of transformation.

On the basis of the evidence currently available, the transformation of the Turkish Islamic political party is best explained as a case “when external stimulus joins internal factors,” suggested in Panebianco’s work. Focusing on one factor does not allow us to grasp the complexity of this case, since “... organizational change is, in most cases, the effect of an external stimulus, environmental and/or technological (which joins forces with internal factors which were themselves undermining the power structure (even for example generational changes)” (Panebianco 1988, 242). Analysis presented in later chapters demonstrates this clearly.

The Islamic political party in Turkey has been an active participant in politics since the day it was founded, being involved in coalition governments numerous times. It was banned more than once, along with other parties perceived by state elites to be anti-system. These developments did not lead to a transformation in its rhetoric or policies.

Theories of party adaptation provide important insights to demystify the causal mechanism behind the transformation of the Islamic political party in Turkey. Most importantly, this literature brings external and internal factors into interaction with each other. Theories of party adaptation dissect the balance of power in the internal factions, how these play out in the face of external crises, and the impact and importance of the support of the electorate. Power dynamics and the interplay of intricate relationships between the party and the electorate are analyzed. External factors appear as catalysts that impact alliances and the intra-party power struggle. Leadership is also accounted for. The adaptation of the Islamic political party in Turkey demonstrates how these factors manifest and interact.

The literature on Islamic political parties and movements point to the existence of different political environments that present different sets of challenges. For instance, state repression of political parties is common in the regimes that these actors operate. Inclusion is therefore an important factor in understanding the adaptation experiences of Islamic political parties. The debate on the adaptive potential of radical Islamic political actors is an issue of interest for global political affairs, since these actors might not embrace the Western construct of democracy.

Yet, these theories remain limited in the Turkish case. State repression is an important factor, but requires closer examination of how the causal mechanism operates. The February 28 process is an external shock caused by state repression, and its impact is hidden in the existence of dormant internal factions. Thus, repression alone is not sufficient to explain the founding of a new center-right party.

The interactions amongst different factors, such as the power struggle between the internal factions, have not thoroughly been considered in this literature. Inclusion, on the other hand, has been criticized in the literature for not having broad enough explanatory power. Inclusion into the electoral and political system by itself does not generate willingness to adapt, and it has even less impact on the ideology of a political party, for which the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt is a relevant example. Leadership, which is an important factor in the Turkish case, is lacking from the discussion of Islamic political parties. Although they are based on individual-level changes, learning theories are useful to consider in interaction with other internal and external factors. The combination and

interaction of internal and external processes, which are explained in the next section, are determinative in the transformation of the Islamic political party in Turkey.

Causal Mechanism

This dissertation argues that the military intervention led to a shift in the internal dynamics of the RP by impacting the underlying power struggle. This strengthened the reformist wing and its leader, Erdogan, who formed a coalition with Islamic civil society and businessmen to establish the AKP. This mechanism unfolds around changes in the distribution of power among existing actors within the party, and the impact of the external intervention generated interactions between these factors. The external shock allowed the reformists to expand their power by disturbing the distribution of power among the internal factions. This interrupted and changed the existing power structure. Relations were re-established, while old and new political actors formed a coalition and founded the new political party.

The literature on Islamic political party transformation does not consider interactions between variables. The inclusion and repression arguments do not provide a comprehensive explanation. In the case of the learning perspective, it is not clear what mechanisms link the individual to the party, or how and under which conditions learning occurs. Wickham provides a detailed and useful account of transformation by discussing factions, strategies, and calculations. Yet, the existing internal factions are a crucial factor in determining the form of the causal mechanism and the process of transformation (Nasr 2005, Schwedler 2006, Cavdar 2006, Wickham 2004, Hamid 2014, Wickham 2013).

In the RP-AKP case, the two factions learned differently. The reformists learned that the strategies they employed to increase their votes were successful when they won the mayorship elections. Radicals, on the other hand, experienced repression and faced a political ban, pushing their ideas out of the new party and its way of doing politics. Both of these developments strengthened the hands of the reformist wing.

The February 28 intervention challenged the dominant coalition in the party and empowered the reformist bloc, laying the groundwork for a change in leadership. The repression increased costs for the rising economic classes and civil society, which then mobilized under the new formation. State repression and the desire for electoral success generated a process of learning, which resulted in the formation of the new AKP. In summary, state repression determined the outcome of the internal divisions in the RP, strengthened the rising leader Erdogan, who formed a coalition with the Anatolian bourgeoisie and the Islamic civil society to found AKP. Looking at the process and dynamics, the political party adaptation literature has considerable explanatory power for this case (Panebianco 1988, Levitsky 2003).

The February 28 process is crucial to an understanding of the dynamics of change, since the all-encompassing pressure on the Islamic political actors changed their perceptions. This led them to search for a new path to conduct politics, and shifted the dynamics between the political actors and interest groups within the party. The context and the conditions allowed the reformers to solidify into a movement and become the governing party.

Pre-existing structural factors, including the existing democratic system in Turkey and the socio-economic transformations, define the conjuncture and frame the political and social scene in which the Islamic party was operating. The existing democratic system in Turkey and the demographic changes that had been unraveling since the 1950s are the antecedent conditions that set the tone in the political arena. The rise of the Islamic bourgeoisie and the widening market for religious civil society increased the costs of supporting the RP, due to state repression.

The rising Anatolian bourgeoisie, emergent internal splits in the party, and Erdogan's strong leadership came together as a result of the repressive measures of the state. The critical February 28 intervention crystallized the dynamics of internal party shifts, the emerging alternative leader, and the demands of the interest groups. The interest groups, mainly, but not limited to, Islamic businessmen and the reformists in the RP, began to search for a new party that could be formed under the leadership of Erdogan. At this time, even the Islamists recognized the need for a new formation. The Islamic political actors learned from state repression, which helped them to develop strategic methods to win the elections.

ISLAMIC POLITICAL PARTY: FROM IDEOLOGY TO STRATEGY

This section describes the concrete differences in policies and discourse between the RP and the AKP. Beginning in 1995, the RP gained considerable power in Turkish politics. This momentum, with the party's rising percentage of electoral support as seen in the following graphs, would later be transferred to the AKP:¹³

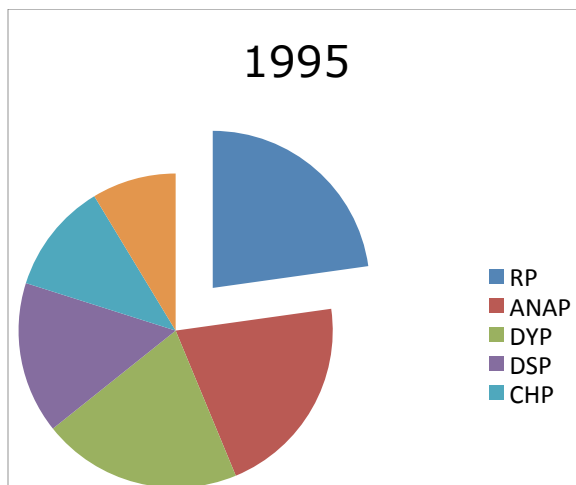


Figure 1 1995 National Elections

Table 1 1995 National Election

RP	21.3
ANAP	19.6
DYP	19.2
DSP	14.6
CHP	10.7
MHP	8.1
Other	6.7

¹³ The data used for these graphs are from the Tuncer & Danaci study of elections and electoral systems between 1950-2002.

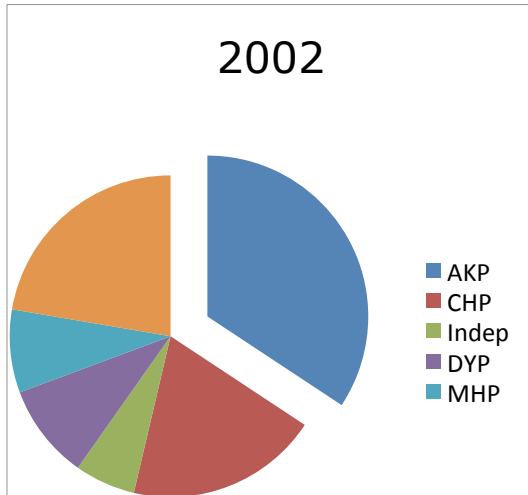


Figure 2 2002 National Elections

Table 2 2002 National Elections

AKP	34.29
CHP	19.38
Independent	6.1
DYP	9.56
MHP	8.35
Other	22.32

The shift from the RP to the AKP has been summarized in the preceding chapters.

This section provides more details in order to understand these processes.

Table 3 AKP Foreign Policy, Economic Policy, Secularism

AKP Foreign Policy: More collaboration with different countries rather than stress on the formation of D8 and focus on the Middle East. Still negative rhetoric used against Israel, or Western states, yet relations more developed and balanced. Continues with the EU accession process, although mentions a Shanghai 5 would be better. (Erbakan also had weapons agreements with Israel, yet much stronger rhetoric). Erbakan used more religious terms in the field of foreign policy, such as speeches on the world being ruled by the Jews and Muslims pressured by the secret world state-mentioned by the Milli Gazete.

Economic Policy: Trade all around the world, extending relations with Muslim majority states around the world, yet European states are still the biggest shareholder. Muslimness is not stressed in rhetoric.

Secularism: Exclusion of a sharia state from the rhetoric. Many interviews suggest continuity of basic values regardless of the conceptual shift. Mechanisms used to create a gradual change in everyday practices of citizens.

After its foundation in 2001, the AKP emerged as the leading party and was able to form one-party cabinets after years of unstable coalitions. The AKP won the municipalities of 32 cities, where the RP used to be the primary party. The transition to the AKP marks a great leap in the electoral success of the Islamic party from the 21 percent vote of the RP to 34 and 47 percent of the vote by the AKP. Scholars and policy analysts attributed this success to AKP's endeavor to differentiate itself from the RP legacy by situating itself as a conservative democratic party since its foundation, and its emphasis on pluralism, human rights, liberal democracy, and market economy, and its loyalty to secularism.¹⁴

The policies of the AKP have been remarkably different than those of the RP, mainly in foreign and economic policy and its position on secular law. During its time in government, the RP focused on building alliances with the Islamic states, which can be

¹⁴ This insight has been challenged. For discussion, see conclusion.

seen as a reflection of the party's anti-Western attitudes.¹⁵ Among the initial policy decisions of the new government was Necmettin Erbakan's \$23 billion gas pipeline deal with Iran.¹⁶ While the end of the 1990s marked a challenging era in Turkish-European Union (EU) relations, the Turkish head of government sparked controversy by his decision to boycott the Dublin summit of EU leaders in 1996.¹⁷ Erbakan limited his diplomatic visits to a dozen Islamic states, following his aspiration to establish a group of eight Muslim countries (D8) as an alternative to Western international organizations.

On the contrary, the Prime Minister of Turkey and the chairman of the AKP, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, regularly joined meetings of the G-8 and G-20, and have continued to strengthen Turkey's relations with states around the world, contrary to the one-sided foreign policy of the RP. The AKP has also been enthusiastic about the EU accession processes, even more than other parties in the Turkish political arena, and worked to pass laws in the first years of its governance on economics, Kurdish rights, and human rights more broadly. Under the AKP's initiative, Turkey has become the co-chair (along with Spain) of the "Alliance of Civilizations," calling for dialogue between different religions, ethnicities, and regions, as opposed to the dividing language of the "clash of civilizations."

¹⁵ Although some interviewees suggest that the RP aimed to strengthen Turkish foreign policy by forming a new block against the Western institutions in order to provide Turkey a powerful hand to negotiate, the speeches of some members indicate anti-Western attitudes as well.

¹⁶ Erbakan is the founder and the head of the RP.

¹⁷ hurriyetdailynews.com. 1996 "Erbakan Turns Down EU's Dinner Invitation." December 4. <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/erbakan-turns-down-eus-dublin-dinner-invitation.aspx?pageID=438&n=erbakan-turns-down-eus-dublin-dinner-invitation-1996-12-04> (accessed March 27, 2010).

The anti-Western rhetoric of the RP similarly framed its economic policies. The RP strongly opposed the Customs Union agreement with EU in 1995. During that era, the voices of radicals prevailed. These include Helmut Kohl, who stated that Turkey as a Muslim country cannot join the EU, while officials in the RP similarly claimed that the EU was a Christian club. Yet, the differences between the RP and the AKP are still crucial to consider within the broader economic framework, which the AKP has sought to maintain. Namely, the AKP has been keen on developing economic and diplomatic relations with various countries regardless of their religious beliefs.

In addition to the AKP's close relations with the EU, it has enhanced trade relations with the Western states, as well as China, Russia, and other Muslim countries. The landmark of the AKP's economic policy is its stress on the preservation of a small state and a free market, evidenced by the privatization of fundamental state enterprises, such as TEKEL (tobacco and liquor) and Turk Telekom (telecommunications). In fact, rather than ideology as in the case of the RP, the AKP has emphasized economic development and growth in its economic policies.

The third way in which the RP and the AKP differ is on their stance toward the rule of law. Erbakan's ideal of a just order sought to organize society around religious principles, evidenced in his proposal to refer to multiple sources of religious law in different areas of social conduct. Erbakan claimed this would bring about genuine

pluralism.¹⁸ Erbakan and the RP also questioned the principle of laicism in Turkey (a form of secularism in which the state exercises considerable control over the expression and conduct of religion), suggesting that “laic”¹⁹ was a vague term that needed to be re-framed in the constitution in a publicly comprehensible way. It must be noted that “laic” is considered to be an unchangeable attribute of the Turkish Republic, as it is forbidden to amend the constitution on this matter.

The AKP has expressed respect for the secular rule of law that encompasses all citizens, and did not propose an alternative system. The AKP has orchestrated democratic opening projects towards the Alevis and the Kurds, in a context where the rights of ethnic minorities have traditionally been perceived as a threat to the unity of the state. Erdogan was the first to use the term “Kurdish conflict” in an official sense, rather than refer to the issue as the “Southeastern conflict,” a gesture that helped to transform the framework of discussions. The difference in terms under the AKP governance are important to point out, although these policies did not lead to a more pluralist system and society.

Islam was a major reference point in the RP’s definition of its identity. The role of Islam in organizing society, economics, and politics—albeit not to the extent of a Shariah state, with the exception of some of its members—was constantly emphasized. On the other hand, the AKP, by explicitly defining itself as a conservative-democratic party, has

¹⁸ The population of Turkey was 73,722,988 by the end of 2010 (tuik.gov.tr). Approximately 99 percent of the population is Muslim, among which 10-20 million are Alevi. Therefore, religion is a problematic criterion for establishing pluralism.

¹⁹ While for a considerable number of citizens, “laic” connotes the preservation of the modern Turkish state, where religion does not have a role in politics, it has been symbolically problematic for some citizens who define themselves as Muslims and believe in the importance of Islam in shaping society (and politics), who perceive laic as analogous to non-religious.

been careful to stress its divergence from the RP legacy, reduced its references to Islam, and increased its emphasis on the preservation of the secular Turkish Republic, the cultivation of a smaller state and a balanced foreign policy, integration into the global market, and a dedication to Turkey's EU membership. The AKP stresses the importance of pluralist politics with respect to competitive party politics, defending the rights of the members of different religions and ethnicities.

Interviews provide important accounts of the difference between the RP and the AKP. Comparing the two parties, two recurrent themes emerge. Interviewees from different backgrounds and affiliations state that the values of the Islamic political party have been preserved during and after this transition. For instance, Zehra Taskesenlioglu, who was working at the Istanbul organization during the interview, and is now a member of the Parliament, stated: "The AKP speaks to the people with traditional values. Politically, the values of the AKP are the same as the RP, being from among the same people. The AKP and the RP are from the same batch."²⁰ A second theme refers to the differences between these parties regarding the conduct of politics and centrality of religion. This stress on a pragmatic political stance is recurrent in the interviews. The same interviewee suggested: "During the RP era, first in line had to be religion. With the AKP, religion is not the priority. The party forms policies based on the conditions and circumstances. While conducting politics, religion cannot be number one anymore." Another interviewee stated: "The main differences between the RP and the AKP, as Erdogan has declared himself clearly, 'we will not conduct politics based on religion.'

²⁰ Zehra Taskesenlioglu, personal interview, December 7, 2010, AKP Istanbul Headquarters.

This means that the ones in our tradition have made politics based on religious sensitivities. This is the most important difference.”

A prominent figure in the Gulen movement argued that the AKP marked a sharp break from the old Islamist parties.²¹ He defines the difference, as “The most important thing that differentiates the AKP from the RP is that they are smart and they can see the big picture. We are obliged to practice a very fine Islam and the way to do this today is not to found an Islamic state, and they have grasped that.”

This idea has been crucial for AKP supporters. Religious movements such as the larger Nur community, as well as Gulen and Suleymanefendi, did not support the RP and voted for the center-right.

The RP policies and the vision of Erdogan were defined as imaginary in many of the interviews. As Rusen Cakir, a prominent journalist, recalls from his chat in 1993 with a young member of the Milli Gorus movement, as a response to his question “What do you think about Erdogan’s connecting every malice in the world to Zionism?” he said, “I don’t approve it. As a person living in New York for years, I can say easily that what the Hoca says about Zionism is correct, to the extent that, we cannot come to office and stay in the office by standing against it. That is where the Hoca is doing wrong.”²² This clearly states that the social base did not approve of this way of conducting politics.

Another account of the difference between the RP and the AKP suggests a change in mentality. The RP was thought to be closer to the mindset of the radical Carsamba

²¹ In the case of the Gulen movement, the high-ranking members that I interviewed were all men. There are high-ranking women members, yet men have more prestige and power. Based on observation.

²² <http://www.gazetevatan.com/rusen-cakir-433566-yazar-yazisi-erdogan-arasindaki-en-temel-fark/>

religious order. The negative reactions the RP leadership expressed against people who did not vote for them have were also recounted in different interviews.

“When they see some don’t vote for them their anger grows. Sometimes they say things to these people like Americanist, Zionist, potato Muslims. He believed his was the only way and the only truth, whatever his objective, he thought this was the method. Holding Islam oriented politics is the biggest harm to Islam. Most of the people on this land are Muslims. If you make politics claiming you are Muslim, whom will you call the ones that don’t vote for you? Islam is the common religion of the people who vote different parties.”²³

A considerable number of the interviews indicated that the RP was perceived as an Islamist political party. “The difference between today’s AKP from the RP is clear. The AKP is not political Islamist. The articulation of the RP in 1990s was framed by Islamic thought; you cannot expect it to compromise.”

A younger member of the AKP underlines the importance of the social dynamics and the changing international context:

“The AKP is not the continuation of the RP. The founders of the party were different than the traditionalists. They used a new rhetoric. The internal worlds of the traditionalists and reformists were different. Society is also transforming. The language of politics is developing with political demand. The perception of politics changed in the same period as societal demands. The AKP analyzed society and the global world in the right way.”²⁴

Ussak defines the change political Islam has gone through as follows:

²³ Erkam Tufan Aytav, personal interview, 2011, Journalists and Writers Association, Istanbul.

²⁴ Personal Interview, October 28, 2010, AKP District Organization, Istanbul.

“There has been a great transformation in the political Islam movement in Turkey. Even though the founding members and the core cadres of the AKP come from the Milli Gorus tradition, I don’t see it as an Islamist party. It is a new formation. The first two years, 2002-2004, they acted without a name or description, and then called themselves conservative democrat. They first organized a congress to define what the AKP is, and then announced it was conservative-democrat. If we must search for a past for the AKP, it is the Justice Party, and before that the Democrat Party. In my opinion, Erdogan is a 2011 version of Menderes. But it’s a new formation.”²⁵

²⁵ Cemal Ussak, personal interview, 2011, Journalists and Writers Association, Istanbul.

Table 4: Variation between RP and AKP

	Speeches	Policy	Public Perception
<p>RP</p> <p>Secularism</p> <p>Legal System</p> <p>Plurality</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “As long as people want it, laicism will of course be terminated. State interferes with religion, will not religion interfere with the state?” Sovereignty rests unconditionally with the nation. Lie, it is a great lie! Sovereignty solely belongs to God”(Tayyip Erdogan, Umraniye, 1994) • “They are enemies of religion, they act like guardians. You can’t live in the way you believe. You shall think, but don’t tell.” (Necmettin Erbakan, TV interview, 1996) • “God interferes with everything. God is not impotent about worldly matters. No party would be left. We call for your support so that God interferes with this country.” (Sevki Yilmaz, MP, 1996) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Muslim people who want to live according to their faith face practices that violate their human rights. The tyranny on headscarf, Friday prayers, obstacles on the discussion and education of the essence of Islam and the interventions of the political authority on religion will be eliminated.” (RP’s Election Manifesto, 1995) • RP wanted Fridays to be the official holiday. (Necmettin Erbakan, TV interview, 1996) • Necmettin Erbakan called for a legal order that would allow people to be ruled in the way their religion required and organize their lives accordingly. (Necmettin Erbakan, TV interview, 1996) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • According to a nationwide survey conducted in 1999, the majority of the population did not believe that there is a real possibility of a Shariah based religious regime in Turkey. • Yet, those in favor of a Shariah state were 21% • Those in favor of a religion-based party were 25%. (Carkoglu&Toprak, Degisen Turkiye’de Din, Toplum ve Siyaset, 2006)

<p>AKP</p> <p>Laicism</p> <p>Law</p> <p>Plurality</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "We are against politics that utilizes religion or laicism. AKP is not a religious party; it's a human based party. Individuals are not laic, the state is." (Erdogan, IPI meeting, 2007) • "The founder of our Republic, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk stated "Justice is the foundation of the state" thus emphasized that rule of law is indispensable (Tayyip Erdogan's speech, Turkiye Newspaper, 2009) • "I recommend a secular constitution for Egypt. Do not fear secularism because it does not mean being an enemy of religion. I hope the new regime in Egypt will be secular. I hope that after these remarks of mine the way the Egyptian people look at secularism will change." 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Framed headscarf ban as a human rights and democracy issue. Did not work assertively on lifting the ban. • Our party considers religion as one of the most important institutions of humanity, and secularism as a prerequisite of democracy, and an assurance of the freedom of religion and conscience. (AKP Party program) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • According to a nationwide survey in 2006, the people in favor of a Shariah state declined to 9% from 21% in 1999. • Those who indicate that religious people are subject to state repression declined significantly from about 43% to 17%. (Carkoglu&Toprak, 2006)
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<p>RP</p> <p>Foreign Policy</p> <p>EU</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Islamic world became the new enemy of racist imperialism with the disintegration of the Soviet bloc” • “Who decided for the Customs Union?” (Erbakan, Parliament, 1995) • “This is a completely ideological, political event. It is certain that Turkey will not join the EU. Because EU is a Christian club.”(Abdullah Gul, the current President, 1995) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Erbakan signed a \$23 billion gas pipeline deal with Iran • Erbakan had two visits abroad, to dozen states in the Muslim world, and a controversial visit to Libya • Erbakan wanted to establish a group of 8 Muslim countries (D8), as an alternative to Western institutions. • Erbakan stated he thought of the invitation to attend the Dublin summit of EU leaders as an insult. (Middle East Quarterly, 1997) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EU actors’ speeches on how Turkey does not belong to the EU led to negative public opinion. • Yet, the Customs Union agreement was welcome by businessmen, including Anatolian Muslim entrepreneurs. • The radical wing supported the imperialism argument. (Tugal, 2009) • According to the nation-wide survey in 1999, 60% was against the policies of RP, 40% supported it. 37% approved of the ban on RP, while 38% opposed it. (Carkoglu&Toprak, 2006)
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<p>AKP</p> <p>Foreign Policy</p> <p>EU</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We continue to work on the process for joining the EU. We handle this process by determination and will. Turkey is not an inward country. 65% of Turkey's exports are to the EU. We are gaining friends, not enemies, and we will continue like this." (Erdogan, 2006, Zaman) • "All these visits, meetings, projects and agreements are substantial indicators that Turkey is on a completely different track, a different classification" (Erdogan, Parliament, 2009) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AKP was very keen on EU accession processes particularly in the first years of government. • AKP worked perseveringly on passing laws to harmonize the system with the EU law for the EU accession process. Laws on economics, Kurdish rights, human rights were passed. • Erdogan joined meetings of G-8 and G-20 regularly. • Turkey has been the co-chair of the Alliance of Civilizations with Spain. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The determinance of AKP on speeding up the negotiations with the EU has been welcomed TUSIAD (centre-based liberal businessmen's association), MUSIAD (periphery based Muslim businessmen's association) liberal commentators, and also the majority of the Turkish population. • In 2006, AKP voters suggested that preserving Islamic values, supporting EU membership, believing economic conditions will improve and the leader were factors they took into account in the elections. (Carkoglu and Toprak)
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The AKP disconnected itself from the religious contexts of the traditional right-wing clichés. It preferred to shift its focus to the free market economy and embrace it more assertively than any other political party in Turkish history. In contrast, the economic model that the RP proposed, Just Order, was a closed system with zero interest

rates and economic relations mainly with Muslim countries. The AKP has maintained a strong commitment to Turkey's presence within the Western alliance led by the United States. Meanwhile, it aspired to be a regionally-dominant actor, particularly in the Middle East, rather than completely breaking with its Western orientation and forging a union of Muslim countries, as the RP had wished to do. The AKP's rhetoric did not challenge the secular system, as there is a clear reduction of the usage of Islamic rhetoric. The role of religion and stress on being Muslim decreased. Yet, the AKP continued to challenge the way secularism had been interpreted and practiced in Turkey prior to its rule. The AKP defended secularism in its public speeches. While most of the interviewees also proclaimed their support for secularism, they stressed that secularism in Turkey should mean that believers are protected by the state. The party is also keen on keeping religious symbols visible in daily life. The speeches and actions of the party members, however, sometimes suggest that the primary aspects of life, from family to politics, should be suffused with religious symbols and rituals. The government has increased the role of the Presidency of Religious Affairs (*Diyanet*) and placed more stress on religious education. However, the AKP's discourse remains distinct from that of the RP.

The next section describes the structural background in which the party operates. These conditions have been conducive to the rising success of the Islamic political party. More importantly, they have provided a suitable environment from which the reformist faction of the Islamic political party emerged stronger after the power struggle, which led to the founding of the AKP.

ANTECEDENT CONDITIONS

This section details the broader context of the party change. The structural conditions and rising bourgeoisie are highlighted in order to situate the debate around the external shock in the ensuing chapter. The fact that the Islamic political party operated within a democratizing regime that held free and fair elections is important to the outcome of the transformation process. Changes to economic conditions and to the interests of the economic and civil society actors also played an important role in the foundation of the AKP. Demographic changes in Turkish society provided a background that helped to increase the support of the party in the first place. Changing demands again worked in favor of expanding the reformist coalition.

The democratizing system, particularly the existence of the mechanism of free, fair, and regular elections, is one of the antecedent conditions of the shift in the behavior of the Islamic political party in Turkey. This rules out explanations arising from political inclusion of the sort examined in the previous chapter. The opportunity to be a governing party determines the party's behavior and rhetoric, as the party programs and promises have the potential to mobilize demand. This also creates a platform from which the electorate and social bases can impact the party. The reformists had a stake in pursuing the power game in the party and increasing their chances for the election bid.

Demographic Changes

Considering long-term changes in Turkish society is important to understanding the context in which the Islamic political party has been operating. This entails the left-right cleavage, migration dynamics, and education.

The founding party of the Turkish Republic, the CHP, has been the center-left party in Turkish politics, and has gone through transformation of its own. The CHP ruled the country until the 1950 elections, when the transition to multi-party democracy occurred. The DP represented the landowners and provided an alternative to the economic policies of the CHP. The DP was a center-right party that represented the pious sections of society as well. The political mobilization that occurred until the 1980 coup created strong left-wing formations that were also powered by youth organizations. This wave was disrupted by the military coup that disrupted these organizations. With the adoption of the new constitution, which made syndication and unionization more difficult it became harder to organize politically under the left wing. The regime increased these pressures on the left because it defined communism as a threat. Meanwhile, right-wing political parties had a solid base, and the Islamist base grew even stronger in the 1980s. The harder it became for the left to mobilize, the stronger the right became. As a prominent columnist explains, “When the political activities of the left, inhibited by the 1980 coup, diminished in the slums of the big cities, the RP filled in the vacuum” (Tinc, 1998).²⁶

²⁶ <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/kadin-fazilette-soz-hakki-istiyor-39010506>

Internal migration is an important factor in Turkish politics as well. The populist right-wing parties were looked upon favorably by those who emigrated from rural to urban areas and faced challenges in housing and employment. The rise of the Islamist party in the 1990s also coincides with these waves of internal migration, as it provided an outlet for the preservation of their members' social and cultural values.

As stated in a field interview with one of the founders of the Islamist movement in Turkey, "Why has the Islamist movement grown? It has because of the increasing schools in Anatolia. Youngsters came to the big cities for college. Islamist associations, religious orders, and foundations placed them in dorms. They were college graduates in the slums, and became leaders of the Islamist movement." This also refers to the role of religious orders in a changing society.

Table 5 Education in Turkey, 1950-2012

	Primary	Middle	High	University
1950	69,5	4,8	5,2	1,3
1960	81,1	15,8	13,2	3,1
1970	99,7	30,7	20,1	5,7
1980	97,7	40,6	28,4	6,4
1990	102,1	58,8	36,6	14,5
1995	96,5	65,1	53,4	18,5
2000	100,9	100,9	61,0	22,3
2005	95,6	95,6	85,2	34,5
2010	107,6	107,6	89,7	58,5
2012	107,5	107,6	96,8	74,9

Data: SPA and TSI, yok.gov.tr

The educational institutions of the Turkish Republic were criticized by some of the Islamists. For instance, the famous novel, *Abdullah from Minye*, which was written in 1967 by Hekimoglu Ismail and sold thousand of copies, depicts the history teacher in middle school as a woman who had feelings for her student, Abdullah that could only be felt towards a husband (Ismail 1967). The novel presents secular education institutions as harmful to religious values and the traditional norms of piety. Imam Hatip High Schools provided an alternative for those who wished to have a religious education.

The history of the Imam Hatip High Schools (vocational schools to educate religious clerics, IHL) are important to the discussion of Islamic political actors in Turkey. IHLs and religious education have historically been contentious issues in Turkish politics.

The first IHLs were opened in 1924, but closed down in 1930 due to low enrollment numbers (TESEV, 12). Until 1948, religious education was provided through Quran courses run by the Directorate of Religious Affairs. Just before transitioning to a multiparty system, the CHP proposed to reopen the IHLs, with the aim of appealing to broader segments of society. In 1951, with the DP in power, the Imam Hatip Schools were reopened. In 1959, the High Islamic Institute was opened as a school of higher education for the graduates of IHLs. 876 students were registered at IHLs during the 1951-1952 school year. By 1969-1970, there were 36,655 students registered in middle school, and 5,235 in high school, while the number of schools had risen to 72.

As suggested by a graduate of the IHLs, Cemal Ussak, who attended the Istanbul IHL in 1995, many of his friends became member of the parliament and part of the cabinet. IHL graduates became very active in politics, both in the Islamic party and the center right-party, ANAP. This is one of the factors that contributed to the diffusion of the Islamic political party into the society.

“The advantage of IH schools is that alongside religious knowledge, there is also an advanced education of hard sciences and social sciences. Also social activities, I was in the janissary band and a folklore team linked to the National Turkish Students Union (MTTB). Erdogan was its chairman at the time. I was in the musical team. We tried to be as active as possible. Activities about different ideological issues in Istanbul were never lacking. All IH students would take another high school diploma and move in another area since they could not directly enter universities. I graduated from Pertevniyal. First, we were learning religion at IHLs, then we were getting a vocational training. Teachers would encourage students to do that.”²⁷

The first National Front coalition government in 1975-1977 included the Justice Party (AP), National Salvation Party (MSP), National Action Party (MHP), and Republican Trust Party (CGP). The second in 1977-1978, without the CGP, increased the number of IHLs to 334. By 2005-2006, there were 452 IHLs, so that more than half of these schools were opened during the time of these two coalition governments (TESEV, 17).

²⁷ Personal interview, Cemal Ussak, 2011, Istanbul.

Table 6 Number of Imam Hatip Schools

1951-1952	1969-1970	1975-1978	2005-2006
7	72	334	452

Source: İrfan Bozan, TESEV Report

In addition to these contextual conditions, the perception of members of society toward the pressures placed on religious people is relevant in understanding support for the Islamic political party. The party had stressed the lack of freedom for the pious since its foundation. Supporters and party officials have mentioned February 28 as a direct intervention into the activities of Islamic political, economic, and civil society actors. It is also a reason why they chose to act together, so as to prevent further state repression of this sort against them. This strengthens identification with the party and thus its support.

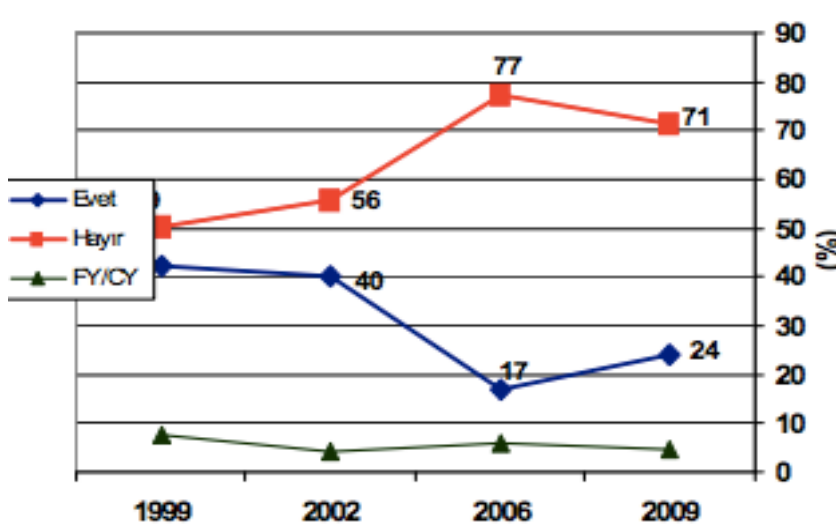


Figure 3 Is there pressure on the pious people in Turkey?²⁸

²⁸ Carkoglu and Kalaycioglu Report on Piousness in Turkey.

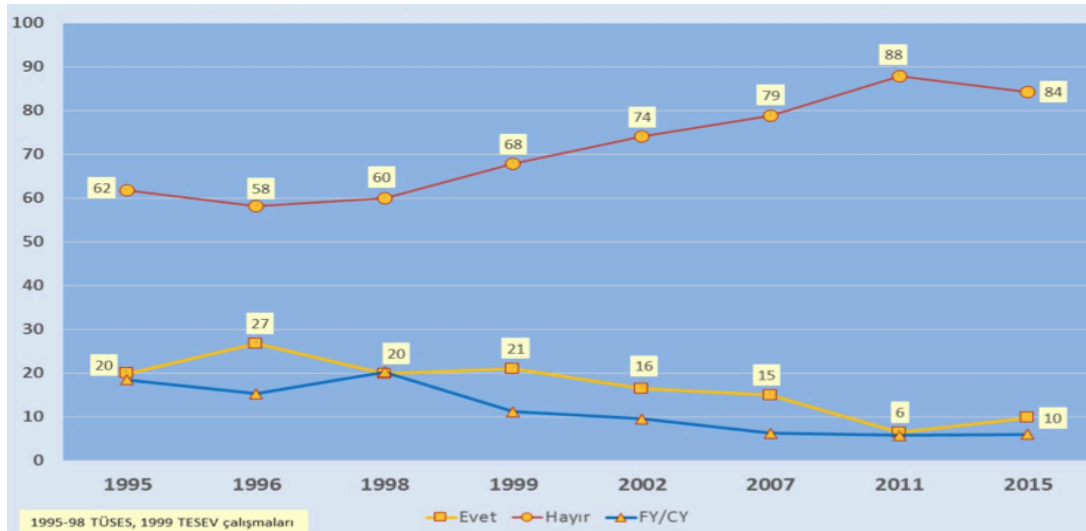


Figure 4 Do you want a religious state based on Sharia in Turkey?²⁹

As seen in the figure below, migration drastically shifted the balance of urban/rural population. As the RP sought to appeal to the urban poor, the problems of new migrants to the cities were on its immediate agenda. While forming their policies for the electorate base, the RP started making home visits. Erdogan also applied his list of tactics to widen the party's base. Thus, Erdogan formed direct relationships with members of society, which helped him understand their demands. This was an important factor in increasing his chances to become an alternative leader.

²⁹ TUSES and TESEV studies

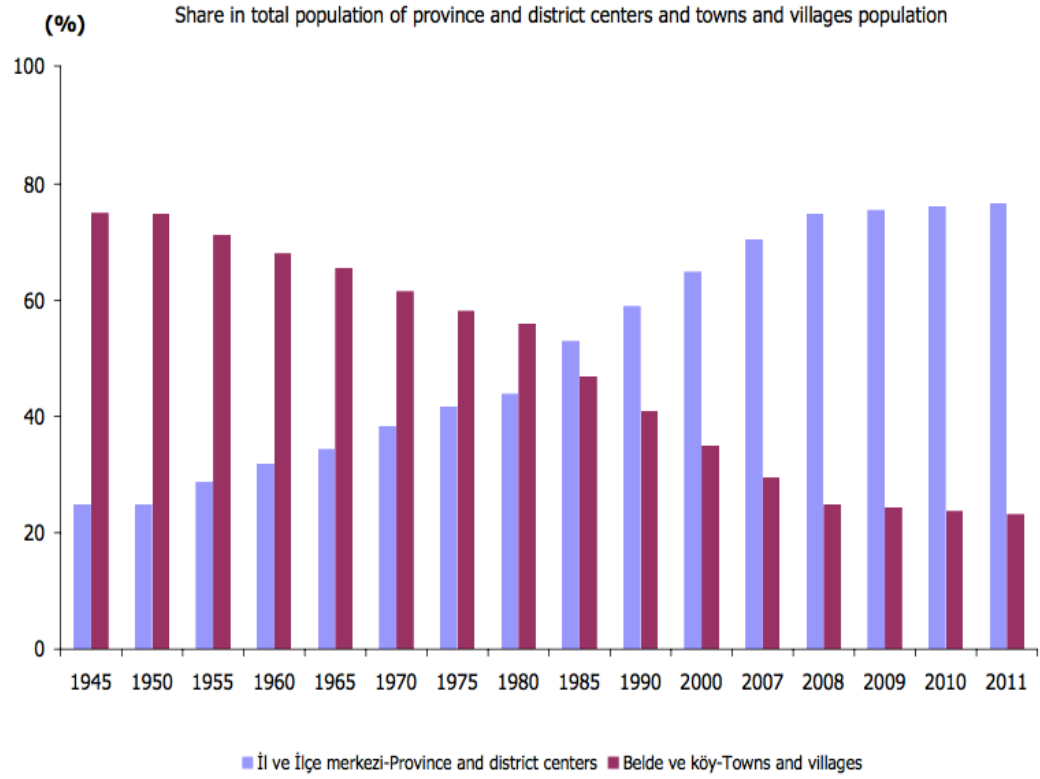


Figure 5 Urban Rural Populations³⁰

The Turkish democratic system provides fertile ground for party change. In the context of the democratic system, transformation occurred. Particularly, the existence of free, fair, and regular elections provides political actors with an opportunity to win elections and become the governing party or part of a governing coalition. Indeed,

³⁰ Statistical Indicators 1923-2011, Ankara : TUIK.

becoming the ruling party in a democratic system brings it into contact with constraints and opportunities.

These demographic transformations led to changes in the needs and interests of society, which were reflected into political demands from the political parties.

Demographic changes mainly occurred as a result of the migration waves, which led to increasing urbanization and changes in education trends around the country.

The rule of coalition governments and rising political violence on the streets in the 1970s culminated in the 1980 military coup. This initiated a new era of increasing state power and decreasing individual freedoms, especially in the sphere of political organizations, on the eve of a new economic liberalization program. Later in this decade, the country entered a cycle of periodic economic crises. Once again, a fragmented political party system led to a secession of coalition governments in the 1990s.

Meanwhile, the Islamic party began its rise to power.

In the three years following the coup, the Turkish military ruled the country through the National Security Council, before democracy was restored. The military regime conducted a top-down social engineering project, the Turkish-Islamic synthesis, which was mainly targeted at leftist organizations. The cultivation of a religiously-inclined society via political actors against the perceived threat of rising communism shifted the balance of ideological cleavages more towards the right.

The left, which was politically organized into political parties, syndicates, and unions, was crushed by the coup and the ensuing military regime. The environment

became conducive to the development of the right wing, in particular, those tendencies that would later identify themselves within political Islam.

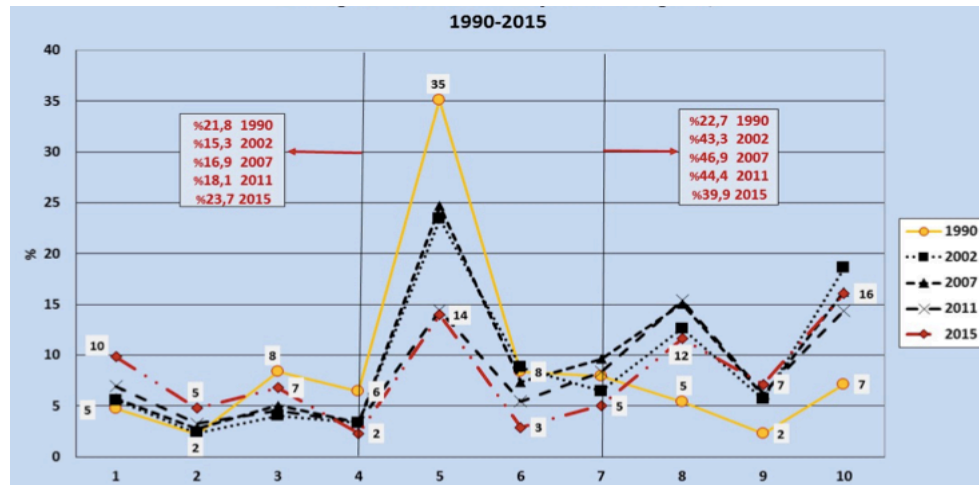


Figure 6 Left-Right Cleavages

The 1980 military intervention in Turkey changed the political, social, and cultural environments. In the preceding years, social and economic transformations contributed to the rise of the Islamic bourgeoisie and Islamic civil society. During the 1990s, Islamic businesses, which were mostly small- and medium-sized enterprises, flourished.³¹ Anatolian capital started to rise, and the balance shifted from the traditional business elite to the new rising Islamic elite.

³¹ The increase in identity movements in this era can be explained also by the changes in state autonomy questioned in the global economic structure. The weakening of the state led to the strengthening of identity politics.

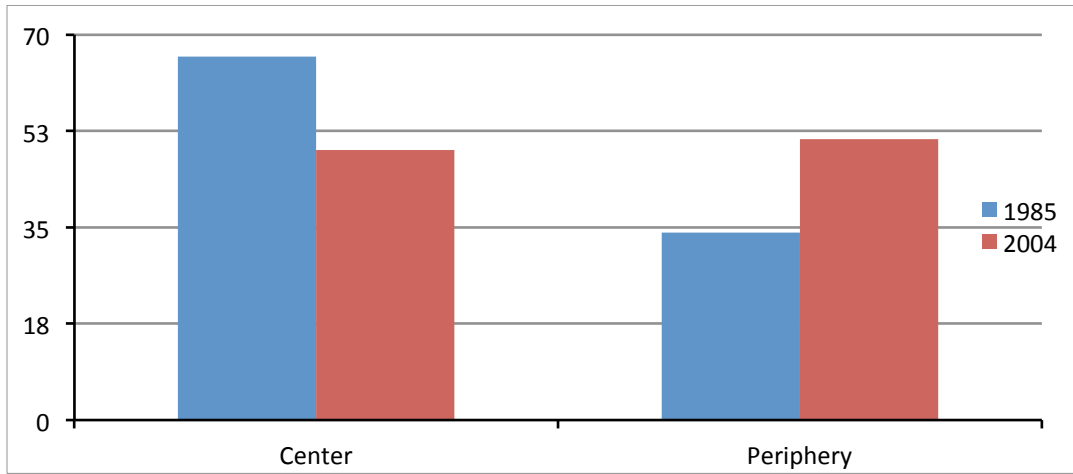


Figure 7 The percentage of the value added by the center and the periphery³²

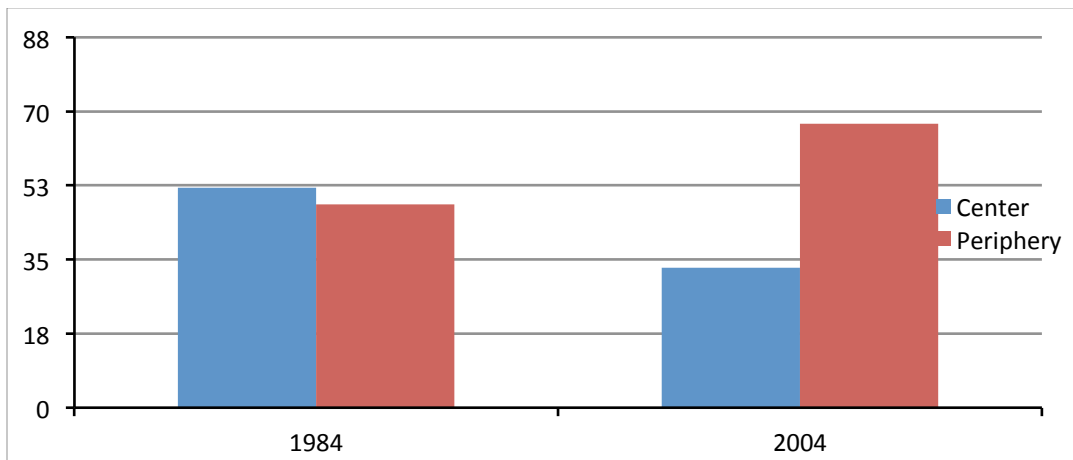


Figure 8 The employment rate provided by the center and the periphery³³

³² Erol Katircioglu. 2010. <http://arsiv.taraf.com.tr/yazilar/erol-katircioglu/vesayet-rejiminin-sonuna-dogru/10740/>

³³ Ibid.

On the other hand, the growing market combined with internal migration and the schooling of young kids going to different cities created a boom for religious orders, which opened dormitories and courses for university entrance exams. While this strengthened the orders and increased their power, the economic stakes became higher.

After the Islamic party became a coalition partner and the leading party in 1996, it faced considerable state repression. The consequent banning of the party opened up a platform that allowed discussions amongst the different wings of the party. Necmettin Erbakan, the founding leader of the Islamic movement and the Islamic political party in Turkey, who was once the political ally of the rising bourgeoisie, was criticized for harming the movement with his non-reconciliatory rhetoric and policies. After the party ban, the difference of opinion between the traditionalist and the reformist wings surfaced. The reformist wing grasped this political opportunity and split from the party to found a catch-all party. The internal split in the party had already begun by the time Tayyip Erdogan had participated in his first electoral race. Erdogan had been part of the party organization, and he was elected to different levels of the party ranks, until his victory in the local elections, when he was elected the Mayor of Istanbul. His leadership skills and his emergence as a strong, potential party leader, were major factors leading to the transformation of the RP.

February 28 had a critical impact on these dynamics by causing them to interact with one another. Consequentially, external influence did not lead to party transformation and greater party integration. Rather, it operated as a factor, a critical juncture that

interacted with other factors, such as fragmentation inside the party, to create an opportunity for the reformist wing to become stronger.

At this point, the political costs had risen for the bourgeoisie and the religious civil society. February 28 had targeted the ideological wing of the party, which was purged between 1997 and 2002. The repression entailed an encompassing network of politicians, civil society, and business, which gathered under the roof of the reformists in the RP. As a result, social factors, the internal split, and the contest over leadership led to the formation of the AKP. The existence of a possible alternative leader helped to channel the discontent. The civil society and business actors who supported the party desired transformation because of the costs of repression, which led to the convergence of these factors. By the time of the historical congress of the Virtue Party (*Fazilet Partisi*, FP), which was established following the ban of RP, this coalition had formed. The VP itself was banned in 2001. The program of the Virtue Party suggests a softening of tactics, with an emphasis on international law, universal values, pluralism, and democracy.

After the FP was banned, the split gained visibility and solidified into a new party. In the process of transforming from an ideological party to a catch-all party, the party's ideology inevitably changed. Some of the radicals, who wished to establish an Islamist state and criticized party politics, were absorbed into the newly-established AKP.

However, the Islamic political party did not transform into a democratic party. The discourse and actions of the AKP suggest that their learning was confined to becoming a party that believes in majoritarian democracy. The AKP continuously utilizes

a self-definition: that they are the “party of the nation” (*milletin partisi*). The Turkish word *millet* is used in a way that not only means “the nation,” but also to suggest that the people who vote for the AKP are Sunni Muslim. The government of 13 years made it clear that this transformation did not lead to a pluralistic democracy.

The following section will take a step back to analyze the February 28 process, the external shock that solidified the shifts in the internal dynamics, and created a new opportunity that led to the coalition that formed AKP.

Antecedent conditions are important in understanding the structure in which the party operated. During the external crisis of February 28, alliances shifted. These conditions provided a suitable environment for the reformists to pursue their aim of forming a catch-all party. For instance, the existence of a democratic electoral system allowed transformation to manifest itself as a plausible option for the political actors during the critical juncture.

The following chapter presents the development of Islamism as a political alternative in the late Ottoman Empire as well as the history of the Islamic political party. This background outlines the actors and changes in the party as well as their relationships with the state over time.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

This chapter presents the historical development of the Islamic political movement as a politicized entity in Turkey, describing its characteristics and how it was positioned against different political currents and historical processes in the country. The Islamic movement originated in the Ottoman Empire and was determined by the subsequent secular Republican Era. This historical account also examines the establishment and founding principles of the first Islamic political party in Turkey. These principles shaped the politics of the party, which has been on the Turkish political scene since 1970. The AKP represents a major shift in the Islamic political movement in Turkey, and it is examined in the context of past experiences.

The Islamic movement emerged in the late Ottoman Empire as an alternative to the challenges imposed by Western imperialism. As one of the dominant ideologies, Islamism attracted a considerable number of followers, and sat on the fault line between the Ottoman past—with the Sultan-Caliphate as the absolute ruler—and the Westernizing, secular Turkish nation (Akcura 1976).

The major aim of the new Republic was to lift the nation to the level of “contemporary civilization” (*muasir medeniyet*) (Mardin 2006, 17). This ideal, however, did not leave any room for Islamic doctrines. One way of achieving this was to cut ties

with the religious components of the empire (Ataturk 1937).³⁴ Thus, the Islamists could not find political ground until the late 1960s. Erbakan's initiation as an unaffiliated candidate for the parliamentary elections in 1969 paved the way for an Islamists movement known as the "independents" (*Bagimsizlar Hareketi*) (Eligur 2010, 66).³⁵ In 1970, the supporters of Erbakan gathered under the umbrella of the first Islamic political party established within the Turkish Republic. The party was named the National Order Party (*Milli Nizam Partisi*, MNP). The next section describes the founding of the Islamic movement and Islamic party and the dynamics that led the way for this formation throughout the nascent multi-party experience of Turkey.

Formation of the Islamic Movement: The Late Ottoman Period

The official history of the Turkish Republic suggests a clear discontinuation between the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic regarding the relationship of state and religion. Consequently, laicism has been framed as a major principle of the Republic, and came into force with the reforms enacted by Mustafa Kemal Ataturk. Moreover, during a period of reform in the Ottoman Empire, state bureaucrats had undertaken efforts to secularize the state, which impacted the role of Islam in politics. Therefore, in order to examine the development of the Islamic movement in Turkey, it is necessary to consider this reform period.

³⁴ At the opening speech of the fifth term of the Turkish Parliament, Ataturk stated: "It is known in the world that our main program in governing is the program of the Republican People's Party. The principles this entails are the main principles that shed light on our government and politics. However, these principles should never be considered similar to the dogmas of the books that are thought to have descended from the sky. We do not take our inspirations from the skies and the unknown, we take them directly from life" (November 1, 1937).

³⁵ The organization of the independents was formed to support Erbakan's candidacy as an independent member of the Parliament, in 1969.

Founded in 1923, the Turkish Republic was led by a new regime under Mustafa Kemal Atatürk that carried out critical reforms, creating an important rupture from the institutions of the Ottoman Empire. Nationalism, secularization, and the standards of contemporary civilization were the building blocks of the new regime. Atatürk believed that the foundation of a modern state was an important stage in the process of modernization, which could only be achieved by a secular state (Karpas 2008, 31). This transformation required a series of secularization reforms within legal, educational, and cultural institutions.

These secularization reforms, however, were not new to the Turkish public. In seeking to compete politically and economically with the Western world, the Ottoman Empire initiated important reforms during its demise. The nineteenth century had been a stimulating period for the Empire, which experienced profound transformations in matters of state, society, and economy. From the outset of the Tanzimat reforms, which began in 1839, the Ottoman Empire faced multi-faceted political, socio-cultural, and socio-economic challenges within its borders. Beginning near the end of the eighteenth century, continuous military defeats in the Balkans led to the reorganization of the Empire, which had fallen behind its industrializing Western European counterparts (Berkes 1999, 137-148). The renovation period that began with the *Tanzimat* decree in 1839, followed by the Reform Edict (*Islahat Fermani*) of 1856, and the first Constitution in 1876, were the initial attempts to reorganize relations between the sultanate and its subjects (Berkes 1999, 155-192). As Sarıbay (1985) posits, the idea underlying these

reforms was that the only way to turn the tide on the decline of the Empire would be through Westernization.

The Ottoman Empire's struggle to catch up with its competitors gave rise to three distinct political approaches: Westernization (*Garbcilik*), Pan-Islamism (*Islamcilik*), and Pan-Turkism (*Turkculuk*) (Saribay 1985, 60, Hanioglu 1997, 133-158, Berkes 1959, Akcura 1976). Supporters of Westernization were integrated in the Young Turk movement. The movement's founder, Abdullah Cevdet, believed that "religion was one of the greatest obstacles to social progress and that it should be replaced by science" (Hanioglu 1997, 134). Westerners aspired to "demystify religion by redefining it according to their materialist beliefs," arguing that "Islam and modern life could not be reconciled," and that "a new ethic should be created for the Muslims" (Hanioglu 1997, 140-144).

Pan-Islamism, on the other hand, gained ground as a reaction to Westernizing reforms in the Ottoman Empire. Islamists argued that the decline of the Empire was due to its failure to Islamize, and that the reforms stood in contradiction to Muslim practices (Saribay 1985, 60). The Islamist movement grew stronger following the autocratic reign of Abdulhamid II. After the Young Turk revolution of 1908, the inauguration of the Second constitutional period threatened an Islamist movement that was amalgamating with Ottoman society.

Another notable group was the anti-superstitious Islamist Westerners, whose proposals included the adoption of European science, art, and trade practices (Saribay

1985, 61). Islam was integrated into the institutions of the regime as well as the daily life of Ottoman subjects. The reforms were upsetting the power structure of the old regime, creating tensions between the central authority and local governors. Islam, as a medium of social identity and a set of social norms, clashed with Westernizing efforts and values (Saribay 1985, 64-65).

Serif Mardin (1991) defines the different articulations of Islamism beginning from the period of *Tanzimat* (1839-1876). Namely, he discusses the role of bureaucracy, local Islam, and religious orders in transforming the relationship between the state and religion, thus state and subjects. The way economic reforms and structural transformations were administered created unrest among the Islamists. This resulted in the attachment of negative attributes to bureaucrats—as “reformers” of the role of religion in societal and state affairs.

The roots of the Islamic movement can be traced back to post-1878, when Muslims became the distinctive majority of the Ottoman Empire (Mardin 1991, 14). The transformation of the Empire and the efforts to prevent its dissolution—amid the reforms of Westernization—induced diverse approaches amongst the Islamists. The new regime and the formation of the Parliament deeply affected the relationship between the state and society. Following the reign of Abdulhamid II, the Young Turks undertook reforms, such as limiting the powers of Sheik-ul-Islam to religious matters, that paved the way to a gradual state-religion divide (Mardin 1991, 17). Meanwhile, the state authorities utilized Islam as the cement to form an umbrella identity that would keep the Muslims of the

Empire together. The Turkish nation was in the making, and the project to formulate new subjects by synthesizing a Turkish-Islamic identity was underway (Tunaya 2007).

The dissolution of the Empire, incessant wars, and the founding of the Republic interrupted these changes in society, leading to a systematic change in the subjects of the Empire, who became citizens of the new Republic.

The Turkish Republic

A new concept of citizenship emerged with the newly founded Republic, summarized by Ataturk's famous saying: "Happy is the one who calls oneself a Turk." Official policies demonstrate that the new Republic defined the Turkish citizen in reference to ethnicity and religion; particularly, Sunni Muslim and Turkish. The Turkish Muslim identity was established by policies that included writing the new official history, conducting studies to prove the ethnic origins of Turkishness, and exchanging populations between Turkey and Greece.³⁶ Reforms regarding secularization during the early Republic also aimed to eliminate the power of officials and notables who based their authority on Islam. Thus, the project created a new national identity of Turkishness while demolishing old power structures.

³⁶ This issue has been widely analyzed by scholars. Tanıl Bora's article on the formation of Turkish identity during the early Republic, Caglar Keyder's article on the formation of a new bourgeoisie in place of the non-Muslim population, and Resat Kasaba and Sibel Bozdogan's edited book *Rethinking Modernity and National Identity in Turkey* present some of the best accounts of the construction of the national identity in the Turkish Republic. Also see Michael Meeker's book, *A Nation of Empire, The Ottoman legacy of Turkish Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), which examines the transition from the Ottoman Empire to the Turkish Republic in a major region of the country, helping us to understand how such a state-oriented provincial oligarchy was produced and reproduced and providing a perspective on the complexities and contradictions of modern Turkish experience.

The project of nationalization entailed limiting religion to the private life and removing it from the ruling mechanism (Saribay 1985, 73). However, this was not secularism in the sense that state and religious affairs were completely separate; it was and still is laicism where the state controls the realm of religion. According to laicism, the state regulates religion and enforces rules over how it is practiced rather than leaving it to the free will of the individual. The definition of the Turkish state as laic was added to the Constitution only in 1937 (Bozan 2007, 53; Gazi Mustafa Kemal 1989, 955).

To implement laicism, the Presidency of Religious Affairs (*Diyanet Isleri Başkanlığı*) was established in 1924 as an institution of the central government to organize and oversee religious activities. Over the years, it has assumed different capacities (Gazi Mustafa Kemal 1989, 1129-1131). As of 2015, the Presidency is one of the institutions that receive the biggest share from the state budget, and it is focused on the practices of the Sunni Muslims.

The formation of the Turkish nation state was a revolution from above and has been the target of criticism for various reasons. From the perspective of the Islamists, the overnight transformation of the system created victims. Amongst people with religious sensibilities, commonly referenced arguments are that the whole nation became illiterate overnight because of the changing of the alphabet, and that pious people were suppressed by utilizing laicism as a mechanism to realize this aim. The current government regularly compares the Republic to its Ottoman past, and both AKP officials and the party base express the desire to rise again as the new Ottomans. As discussed in the previous section, while the new regime shifted power relations and changed the role of religion,

similar reforms had begun much earlier. Referring to the past as a glorified entity is a practice modern-day Islamists utilize as a rhetorical device that advances their vision of a Great New Turkey.

Multiparty democracy began in Turkey 23 years after the foundation of the Republic. Until then, since the founding, the Republican People's Party (*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi*, CHP) had governed the country, led by Ataturk and, later, his comrade Ismet Inonu. Under the leadership of Adnan Menderes, the Democrat Party (*Demokrat Parti*, DP) would split from the CHP in the 1950 elections and become the governing party (Karpat 2004, 33-70). Economics and religious sensitivities were two major reasons behind support for the rule of Menderes. Economic actors criticized the statist economic practices of the founding era of the Republic, and the modernizing measures of the CHP, were perceived as repressive acts and disapproved of by some parts of society (Aksit 1993, 187-200). In fact, one of the first actions of Menderes was to return the language of call to prayer to Arabic from Turkish, an important concern amongst the pious population (Nal 2005, 137-172).

The DP government and Menderes are important references for the current AKP government. Menderes is framed as the leader who overturned non-religious policies and restored the role of religion by easing secular government practices. Menderes had the support of some religious orders as well. One of these orders was the Nur community, which was a widespread, powerful religious sect formed by the followers of a Kurdish Sunni Muslim theologian named Said Nursi, commonly known as *Bediuzzaman* (Mardin 1992). The followers of the Nur community, *Nurcular*, were the main supporters of the

DP during the 1950 elections. Until recently, they have continued to gravitate towards center-right parties.³⁷

Religious support for the DP raised concerns within the National Security Council, which saw itself as the sole protector of Turkey's laic system. In 1960, the armed forces carried out a military coup to topple the Menderes government. Adnan Menderes was sentenced to death for tyranny, and he was executed in 1961, along with two of his ministers (Heper and Sayari, 2002). His execution is still vivid in the public memory, and he is frequently invoked as a democratic hero in the speeches of AKP officials. His demise marked the end of the DP era.

Following the 1960 military coup, a new constitution was written in 1961, creating more liberties and opening space for the cultivation of non-official ideologies.³⁸ New political parties were formed in the period that followed, and the Islamists found themselves in a more politically open system.

The Justice Party (*Adalet Partisi*, AP) was founded in 1961, and assumed office that same year, when Süleyman Demirel was elected party leader. Demirel retained broad support for years to come, and DP supporters shifted their votes to the AP. The latter party came to represent the pious population, and the voters that prioritized their Islamic identity supported the center-right DP and AP. This was until the *Milli Gorus* movement came into play. The first party that was established following the ideology of *Milli Gorus* was the National Salvation Party. While there are ideological reasons for the appeal of

³⁷ Faris Kaya, Personal interview, prominent member of the Yeni Asya religious order, a branch of the Nur community.

³⁸ 1961 Constitution, <https://www.tbmm.gov.tr/anayasa/anayasa61.htm>

this new party, economic factors also played an important role. Saribay states that because the AP did not represent the petite bourgeoisie, these classes found the appropriate platform in which to flourish in the National Salvation Party (1985).

Milli Gorus Movement

Milli Gorus is the ideology put forth by Erbakan that served as the basis for the subsequent development of Islamic political parties in Turkey. Necmettin Erbakan initiated the *Milli Gorus* movement in the late 1960s to support the preservation of Islamist values; most importantly, family values, freedom of Islamic practices, the Islamization of society, and a just economic order.

Erbakan was primarily educated in Turkey, received his Ph.D. in mechanical engineering in Germany, and worked as a professor at Istanbul Technical University. He participated in his first election in 1969, running—and going on to win—as an independent candidate from Konya. Some of his supporters who worked for his campaign back then are still active in Turkish politics today. Erbakan slowly climbed the ladder to the prime ministry, and his movement formed the basis of AKP's later rule.

Erbakan established the *Milli Gorus* movement as a means toward salvation from the supposed degeneration society was facing as a result of modernization policies. The Islamic political parties—the National Order Party (*Milli Nizam Partisi*, MNP), the National Salvation Party (*Milli Selamet Partisi*, MSP), the Welfare Party (Refah Partisi-RP), the Virtue Party (*Fazilet Partisi*, FP) and the Felicity Party (*Saadet Partisi*, SP)—

have all been established as an extension of the *Milli Gorus* movement by the cadres that subscribed to the movement and by its leader, Erbakan.

It is interesting that it is stated in the founding declaration of the MNP: “The sublime morals and virtue in the creation (*fitrat*) of our people will come into action, it will be spread to the whole country through the orderly channels of MNP, and will bring everywhere welfare, felicity, and salvation.” Notably, this declaration includes the names of all the different Islamic parties founded afterwards (Cakir 1994).

Milli Gorus wanted to revitalize what they framed as “national values”: If society had stronger morals, all the issues facing the country would be resolved. For instance, according to MSP followers, the principles of Islam would provide deliverance from the problems of daily life, while modernization should be approached with doubt³⁹ (Saribay 1985, 9).

In an interview with the Editor-in-Chief of a mainstream newspaper shortly before MSP became part of the coalition government, Erbakan explained his party’s vision, the *Milli Gorus*, in detail. First, he defined his party and all of its members as respectful of religion, and called upon all other parties to do the same. Effectively, Erbakan was promoting his party as the most progressive in terms of freedom and human rights (Milliyet 1973, October 18).

³⁹ One of the reasons behind this doubt is Ataturk’s idea of progressing towards the level of contemporary civilization as a major objective for the newly founded nation.

Erbakan declared that the party represented the pride of the nation and the desire of the people who fought in the Independence War. This desire would be framed as the *Milli Gorus*, which he defined as:

Table 7 Erbakan's *Milli Gorus* Definition

1. We follow principles of morality and spirituality, and this is what we will place the most importance on.
2. We are committed to our history.
3. We are against any kind of imitating.
4. We attribute absolute necessity to respectful preservation of traditions and customs of our nation.
5. In the economic sphere, waste will be terminated, the exploitative interest rate will be lifted, fair principles for taxes will be resumed, the money people have accumulated in the banks will be given to those who will conduct useful business and who needs it, and will be utilized for the development of the whole nation, not a limited class, factories, workshops, ateliers will spread to villages, for the development of the nation, no two days will be the same, we will move with determination, passion and faith. (Interview with Abdi İpekci, *Milliyet*, 1997)

At the opening speech of the Congress of the next *Milli Gorus* Party, MSP, the leader of the MSP, Suleyman Arif Emre, described *Milli Gorus* as follows:

“Our party accepts the parallel execution of moral and material development acts. Rule of law should be completed with moral order. Moral order is the moral basis of the democratic regime and the guarantee for its being. The rights and freedoms that the democratic regime grants one could only be used in the benefit of the society. And only in societies where morality and virtue prevail, elections would provide for the moral and just to accede” (Saribay 1985, 110-111).

Saribay discusses the meaning of the concept “national” in the name of the party, and argues that this does not refer to the classical sense of nationalism in Turkey, but rather corresponds to an understanding of *millet* - a community that comes together around the same belief. Based on the separation of all ideas and beliefs such as *hak* (rooted in Islam) and *batil* (outside of Islam, fake) and *kufur* (disbelief), this community comes to existence. Saribay also draws attention to Erbakan’s wish to improve the morale of Muslims by referring to the history of Islam (Saribay 1985, 115).

Islamic Political Parties

As stated earlier, a centralized political party that represented the demands of the Islamist social movement in Turkey was not established until the beginning of the 1970s. Erbakan formed this party with the members and based on the premises of the Milli Gorus movement. The National Order Party (*Milli Nizam Partisi*, MNP) was the first political party in Turkey that represented the Islamists. According to numerous accounts, the leader of the Nakshibendi order, which at the time was the largest and strongest religious order in Turkey, had personally called Erbakan to support the establishment of a party that would voice the demands of pious citizens (Calislar 1995, 31). Mehmed Zaid

Kotku, the leader of the Iskenderpasa branch of the Nakshibendi Order, approved and encouraged the founding of the MNP. Other religious orders also supported the MNP, which created an important social base for the party (Cakir 1994, 21).

The founding manifesto of the National Order Party stated:

“Today is the day when rockets have been fired, after a long era of the efforts to sheer off our Great nation from walking on the most sublime orbit of the human history, by his character that is always devoted to God, supporting the good, preventing the bad prevailed, to put back on the sublime and glorious historical orbit” (Saribay 1985, Cakir 1994).

Cakir describes the founding manifesto of the MNP as Ottomanist, nationalist, Islamist, and modernist, and defines the party as the joint action of pious entrepreneurs and independent businessman in the provincial areas who were educated in the laic education institutes of the Republic (1994, 21). The MNP was banned based on the Political Party Law following the 1971 military intervention, in the form of a publicly announced note.⁴⁰ Erbakan, the party leader, flew to Switzerland, but was called back by a military official to establish another political party and divide the votes of the AP (Cakir 1994, Calislar 1995).

The MSP was founded in 1972, and Erbakan became the party leader in 1973 (Cakir 1994, Calislar 1995). By January 21, 1973, at the time of of the MSP’s First

⁴⁰ The Political Party Law has been amended through years. However, many political parties in Turkey have been banned based on policies and speeches that, according to the law, threatened the unity of the Turkish Republic, by either pursuing ethnic, leftist, or religious politics. The one-party government AKP, after it’s second electoral victory in 2007 with 47% of the nation-wide votes, went through a party closure case based on the allegations that it posed a threat to the regime.

Congress, the party had already been organized in 42 cities and nearly 300 districts. By 1977, the party had reached 65 cities and more than 400 districts (Saribay 1985, 109). The MSP became a coalition partner during the years 1974-1978. Until the 1980 coup d'état, the MSP was an important partner in three different coalition governments. The 1980 coup abolished the Parliament and banned all political parties, including the MSP.

The years following the 1980 coup d'état witnessed fragmentation in Turkish politics, with different coalition governments coming to power and tensions rising throughout the country. All active political parties, as well as their leaders, were banned from politics. The Welfare Party was founded as a continuation of the *Milli Gorus* movement in 1983, and Erbakan became its leader in 1987. In the meantime, a new political party, the Motherland Party (*Anavatan Partisi*, ANAP) emerged as the rising star of Turkish politics. Contrary to the recommendation of the military, Turgut Ozal of ANAP was elected Prime Minister in the 1983 elections. The ANAP is said to have combined four inclinations in society: democratic left, liberal right, nationalist right, and Islamic right. With the *Milli Gorus* movement absent from the political arena, the ANAP filled the void for conservative voters. The ANAP appeared to be a liberal party mostly because of its economic liberalization policies. However, with the ANAP ruling as a one-party government, this marked the first time that religious orders encountered a politically open space and Islamic businessmen were able to pursue their business interests in favorable conditions. Today's Islamists celebrate the Ozal period as a liberalizing force that afforded them room for representation due to his positive approach to the religious orders. Ozal himself was a candidate from the MSP once, and his brother

Korkut Ozal is a respected figure in the Nakshibendi order, which was quite powerful at the time. Turgut Ozal was the Prime Minister until 1989.

The Islamic political party was re-established after the ban was lifted in 1983, and Erbakan became the party leader once again. Once the party became active again in politics, it showed considerable presence. The RP won its first seats in parliament in the 1991 elections, while the influence and popularity of the ANAP was on the decline. In 1995, the RP won more seats than any other party. After a long period of debate, it formed a coalition government with Tansu Ciller's True Path Party (*Dogru Yol Partisi*, DYP).

Table 8: Milli Gorus Parties

				
National Order Party	National Salvation Party	Welfare Party	Virtue Party	Felicity Party
January 1970- May 1971 (banned)	October 1972- October 1981 (banned)	July 1983- January 1998 (banned)	Dec. 1997- June 2001 (banned)	July 2001-
	Coalition I: February- November 1974	1991: 62 MPs	1999: 111 MPs	

	Coalition II: March 1975- June 1977	1994: Local elections success, won Istanbul&Ankara		
	Coalition III: July 1977- January 1978	Coalition partner with most votes: June 1996-June 1997		

Secularism and Democracy in *Milli Gorus* Parties

To better understand the political parties that embrace the Milli Gorus, it is important to analyze the speeches of the party leader and members, their political actions, and party programs of the MNP, MSP, Virtue Party (*Fazilet Partisi*, FP), and *Felicity Party* (Saadet Partisi, SP).

One of the most explanatory statements of the framework of the party base was made by Erbakan at a press conference in 1970, when he stated that anyone who was not a mason, a communist, or a Zionist could be a member of the newly founded National Order party (Saribay 1985, 99). Erbakan also once stated that while other parties have voters, the RP has believers.

Both the MNP and the MSP programs ascribe importance to religious education. These party programs stated that laicism, defined as the guarantee of religious and conscientious freedom, could not serve a means for suppressing religion and disrespecting the pious. This way, the program managed not only to openly challenge

secularism and alert the guardians of the regime, but, at the same time, to present a critique of the way laicism was being implemented.⁴¹

The program of the MNP, under the “Freedom of Conscience” section, states,

“We are against the utilization of laicism, which is defined as the guarantee of freedom of religion and conscience to disrespect the pious and pressure religion. Our party’s measure on the issue of laicism, we are against all sorts of understandings that apply this as anti religion. We aspire to pursue an education policy that prevents the abuse of religious sensations” (Saribay 1985, 102).

A detailed explanation comes from Erbakan’s 1973 newspaper interview with Abdi Ipekci. In describing how they differ from other parties, Erbakan emphasizes the party’s morality and spirituality. Providing an example, he argues that they will not allow obscene movies that would be harmful to children, or cause them to lose sense of their national and moral values. Erbakan explains:

“Our censor will protect the nation’s morality and spirituality. We will show the children of the nation movies that are educational, to nurture the nation. We are against foreign plays, which damage our morality. We will perform plays that depict Sultan Fatih, the conquest of Istanbul. We will not let indecent dressing that will seduce others, in the limits of

⁴¹ MNP Party Program and Election Statement

<https://www.tbmm.gov.tr/eyayin/GAZETELER/WEB/KUTUPHANEDE%20BULUNAN%20DIJITAL%20KAYNAKLAR/KITAPLAR/SIYASI%20PARTI%20YAYINLARI/197600503%20MNP%20PROGRAM%20VE%20TUZUK/197600503%20MNP%20PROGRAM%20VE%20TUZUK.pdf>
https://www.tbmm.gov.tr/eyayin/GAZETELER/WEB/KUTUPHANEDE%20BULUNAN%20DIJITAL%20KAYNAKLAR/KITAPLAR/SIYASI%20PARTI%20YAYINLARI/197600578%20MSP%20SECIM%20BEYANNAMESI%201973/197600578%20MSP%20SECIM%20BEYANNAMESI%201973%200000_0087.pdf

civilization. We will only interfere with these in terms of morality; we have the duty to protect the nation. A person can wear whatever they want. This cannot damage morality. The youth behave this way because they don't know, we will tell them and persuade them. They will change behavior because they believe, and they want to be of benefit to my country. When you tell them, they will be persuaded, when they understand this is not modernity. When they are educated in our schools, we will teach them when they are little. Our schools don't teach moral customs. We will become the most moral amongst nations" (Milliyet 1973, October 18).

Saribay also quotes part of an interview Erbakan gave in Germany. In response to the question, "Can you imagine a Turkey at this age where Sharia law is in effect?"

Erbakan stated, "Theoretically, it is quite possible. The states that preserve Sharia law are very content, yet the decision belongs to the parliament" (Saribay 1985, 119).

The "Understanding of Democracy" section in the MNP's program underlines the importance of responsible and virtuous citizens:

"The ones who are the most knowledgeable and devoted should serve the people, for the people to be governed with the most appropriate and knowledgeable means. There should be free opportunities, and individuals should be able to find virtue, so they do not have reckless independence. Our party defines democracy in terms of bringing into office who are the most knowledgeable, have the merit, and are most subservient to the people, and providing a platform of free opportunities for the ones who work for the establishment of the truth and right and governing in the most just, appropriate and knowledgeable ways. Advancement to democracy should be understood as the path of the individuals to virtue, and should not be a target for reckless independence. Our party believes that democratic regime can only be in communities where virtue and morals prevail. Should these basic values deteriorated, democracy will definitely degenerate and transform into one of the regimes that is against human dignity, and become a means for anarchy."

Perceived as the dominance of non-believers over believers, laicism was thought to be at the root of numerous social problems. The party's understanding of laicism is described in the following section:

“We have an understanding of freedom of conscience that will provide the religious belief, education, indoctrination and manners needs of the citizens. We are against the instrumentalization of laicism, which is defined as the guarantee of freedom of religion and conscience, for the aim of pressuring religion and the pious. Our party's benchmark on the issue of laicism is that we are against any attitude that positions this enterprise to practicing anti religiousness.”

Education is an important part of the policy proposals of the MNP and the MSP.

To educate children in the proper way:

“We aim to implement an education policy that will not let the exploitation of religious feelings, and instead of the wrong policies that could lead to depriving our people of religious knowledge, who had provided the most virtuous examples of practicing freedom of religion and conscience during the dark bigotry of the Europe of the Middle Ages.”

It is also important to look at the policy actions of the MSP throughout the rule of the coalition government. Sevket Kazan, the Minister of Justice, campaigned against obscene publications. As his first action in the government, he removed a nude statue in Karakoy called *Beautiful Istanbul*. Oguzhan Asilturk, the Minister of Interior Affairs, limited alcohol consumption by requiring all restaurants and cafes to obtain a special permit to sell beer (Saribay 1985, 190).

Saribay states that the MSP in essence was an anti-Western, nativist party, aiming to re-experience traditional civilization, but also calling for industrialization. The MSP was not an Islamist or Sharia party, but the party of Islamists and Muslims, and it based its source of political authority on God. Therefore, MSP was a radical party that opened the system up to discussion (Saribay 1985, 217-221).

The MSP tried to place pious members into different ministries, to flourish in the Directorate of Religious Affairs, and to make state investments against monopolistic capital. Erbakan wanted to designate the Director of Religious Affairs to office for life, a move that was not accepted by Parliament, as it was reminiscent of the role of the Shaikh-ul-Islam (Cakir 1994, 23).

When the leader of Iskenderpasa religious order died in 1980, Erbakan argued that political authority had to supersede religious authority. The ensuing leader, Mahmud Esad Cosan, supported the RP until 1990. However, in a letter to Erbakan, he ceded his support due to Erbakan's stance.⁴²

The MSP was a partner of the coalition government in 1974 along with the Republican People's Party. The second coalition MSP was a part of was formed in 1975, with the Justice Party, Nationalist Movement Party, and Republican Trust Party, and lasted for two years. Also, for a year in 1977, the MSP formed a coalition government with the Justice Party and Nationalist Movement Party.

⁴² Which in Cakir's notes, pushed many followers of the order to choose between the party and the order, and since many chose the party, the order weakened over time (56).

Turkey in the 1970s played host to many coalition governments and fragmented politics. This period culminated in the 1980 military coup, which banned all political parties and led to the adoption of a new Constitution, written in 1982. A civilian-led government was restored in 1983, yet the head of the coup remained President. Moreover, the 1982 Constitution contained many problematic articles that restricted organized political activity, centrally controlled the education system, and constrained individual liberties. This Constitution is still in effect in Turkey and these same problems persist. What is more relevant to a discussion of the 1980s is how the military implemented the Turkish-Islamic synthesis as a way to cope with the rise of leftist organizations and parties. Over time, this created an opportunity for Islam to diffuse into the lives of citizens and into the political arena as well. Religious education also became more widespread during this time, with the foundation of many religious schools (*Imam Hatip*) over the years. By the beginning of the 1980s, the Islamization of society had already begun to increase. These schools were first intended to be religious vocational, but they quickly became schools for the conservative parts of society to send their kids to receive a religious education as well as a middle or high school degree (Bozan 1997).

The 1990s witnessed the rise of the RP, first as a powerful player in local elections and then as a government partner. Under the leadership of Erbakan once again, the RP mobilized a much larger social base and received the lion's share of the votes in the 1994 elections. The rule of Erbakan in coalition with Tansu Ciller of the True Path Party created many controversies, mostly based on the speeches of the high-ranking party

officials and Erbakan himself.⁴³ The 1990s were also ridden with corruption scandals and the Kurdish conflict, which grew more and more violent by the day.

Banu Eligur, examining the Islamist party's rise to power, argues that the party's success can be attributed to three factors: the emergence of a political opportunity structure, created primarily by the adoption of the Turkish-Islamic synthesis by the military regime in the aftermath of the 1980 intervention; the presence of movement entrepreneurs with significant organizational, financial, and human resources; and the successful framing of issues by entrepreneurs to expand the appeal of the Islamist social movement beyond the population of Islamists to secular but socioeconomically-aggrieved voters (2010, 144-154).

The famous speech of Erbakan, in which he stated that Turkish society will be ruled by a "Just Order," but whether this would be bloody or not remained to be seen, and declared that people who did not vote for them belonged to the "potato religion," paved the way for the party to be banned.⁴⁴ A meeting held by the National Security Council on 28 February 1997 left Erbakan with a long list of changes he needed to implement regarding the role of religion in the country. In 1997, the National Security Council stated in a secret document that reactionary Islam, rather than communism, was the main threat to national security. The changes proposed by the committee required the state to put

⁴³ Tansu Ciller was the leader of the True Path Party, which was the heir of the Justice Party. Suleyman Demirel was the leader of the Justice Party, and he was one of the most important leaders of the center right tradition. Ciller became the first female president of the Turkish Republic. During her rule, corruption and violent clashes with the Kurdish separatist movement were apparent.

⁴⁴ http://www.dailymotion.com/video/xsoa30_erbakan-kanli-mi-olacak-kansiz-mi_news

greater pressure on religious vocational schools, Islamic enterprises, and political activity.

After the party was banned, the Virtue Party was established, which became a stage for the voicing of fragmented opinions inside the party. The clash between the reformists and the traditionalists ended in a split that led to the formation of the Felicity Party (SP) and the Justice and Development Party (AKP).

The following chapter examines the emergence of the differences of opinion inside the Islamic political party, during the time of RP. The formation of the internal factions is crucial in understanding the process that led to the transformation and fragmentation of the party.

UNREST IN THE RP: UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES OF RISE TO POWER

Islamism was a political current in the late Ottoman Empire, and the followers of this ideology contributed to the formation and rise of the Islamic political party in Turkey. While its opposition to Western imperialism in the dissolving Empire characterized the Islamism of the Ottoman era, the Islamic political party posed a challenge to the secular, democratizing Republic, which it perceived to be founded on Western values. Forbidding activities that challenged the regime, the Political Party Law was invoked to ban the party in 1971, 1980, and 1998.⁴⁵ Repression did not lead to political change, however, and the Islamic political party did not change path until the foundation of two separate parties in 2001. This change resulted from internal power struggles over finding a suitable environment for a new party to flourish in following the February 28 military intervention. Before dissecting this critical juncture in the following chapter, this chapter explains how internal divisions in the party formed after the party's rise to power in the 1994 local and 1995 national elections.

The changing power dynamics inside the Islamic political party in Turkey formed the basis of its transformation from an ideological party, RP to the catch all party, AKP.

⁴⁵ Islamist political party was banned numerous times based on the Political Party Law, Article 101, stating the program and bylaw of a political party cannot be against the freedom of the state, the unitary character of the country, human rights, freedom and the principles of rule of law, sovereignty of the people, principles of democratic and laic republic, defending a dictatorship of a class or group, and inducing committing a crime. <http://www.mevzuat.gov.tr/MevzuatMetin/1.5.2820.pdf>

The power struggle between the different factions of the RP is a determinant yet under-analyzed factor in the party's transformation. The internal party dynamics, changes to the dominant coalition, and the rising leadership of Recep Tayyip Erdogan, are the key factors that paved the way to the split. This chapter discusses these intra-party developments, which began in the late 1980s. *Reformists* and *traditionalists* made up the two primary internal coalitions. These conditions matured and were manifested during a critical juncture, the February 28 military intervention, which will be discussed in the following chapter.

The factions emerging inside the RP set in motion the processes that led to the AKP's founding. The internal split became visible to party officials during the RP's rise to power in the municipalities. The formation of these two separate camps also overlaps with Erdogan's accumulation of power and emergence as a new leader. This chapter elaborates on the power struggle within the party that began in the late 1980s. These two factions did not become apparent to outside observers until the 2000 party congress of the Virtue Party (*Fazilet Partisi*, FP), which was founded following the banning of the RP. For the first time in the history of the Islamic political party, this party congress witnessed competition of two candidates for party leadership. Prior to this congress, Erbakan, the founder and unchallenged leader of the Milli Gorus movement and the Islamic political party, was banned from politics following the February 28 intervention. The competition for power within the party that followed reflected the altered power dynamics. Internal conflicts solidified into a struggle to take control of the party. Erdogan

was also banned from politics following his four-month imprisonment.⁴⁶ Two candidates contended for party leadership in the FP's 2000 congress. One of these candidates was Recai Kutan, representing the traditional wing, and the other was Abdullah Gul, representing the reformist wing. Kutan received 633 votes while Gul received 521 votes, and the traditionalist candidate became the party leader. Yet, this was a close race and pushed the party to a breaking point.⁴⁷ This race was the result of internal divisions, which had started as far back as Erdogan's 1989 electoral campaign to run as a candidate in the race for Mayor of Beyoglu.

The fragmentation inside the party and the power struggle between the two factions became apparent almost as late as the founding of the two separate parties, the Felicity Party (*Saadet Partisi*, SP) and the AKP in 2001. As an external factor, the February 28 intervention surfaced the already-present internal factions, creating an opportunity space for the discontent to solidify into two different political parties. The party's fragmentation and the reasons behind the split, however, have not been thoroughly analyzed in the literature. My field research uncovers the fault lines between the reformists and the traditionalists. While the internal party power dynamics started to shift with the rising popularity of Erdogan and the aggregation of his supporters within the party organization, the conflict in the party ranks revolved around two main issues. First, the party organization engaged in disputes over the participation of women in politics,

⁴⁶ Erdogan was sentenced to 10 months in prison for a speech he gave in Siirt in 1998, after being charged with provoking the people to hatred and animosity by discriminating based on class, race, sect and region. His sentence was reduced to four months. <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/1998/04/22/siyaset/siy00.html>

⁴⁷ Rusen Cakir, 2000. Demokrasi Virusu FP'ye de Sizdi <http://www.birikimdergisi.com/birikim-yazi/3956/fazilet-kongresi-demokrasi-virusu-fp-ye-de-sizdi#.Vsx6uJN950s>

and second, the electoral campaigns spread to the general population rather than focusing on the conservatively religious.

These conflicting political styles were formed along the lines of the older and younger generations within the party. The unrest started among the younger generation, the reformists, organized around the Istanbul branch, which Erdogan directed from 1985 until 1994, when he was elected Mayor of Istanbul. As a journalist who closely worked on the Islamist political party, Rusen Cakir coined the terms for the two factions, reformist and traditionalist.⁴⁸ For the FP Congress, the older generation, the traditionalists, were organized around Erbakan's core team and the founders of the party. The conflicts between these factions were fundamentally about determining the path of the party, whether it would continue to target the pious or seek out a broader base of supporters. In these discussions, the traditionalists accused the reformists of lacking loyalty to Erbakan, an idea that was also reflected recurrently in the field interviews.

There is ample support in the field interviews for the claim that the main differences of opinion were on women's participation in politics and the desired target audience for electoral campaigns. The RP was an ideologically-oriented party, focusing on issues such as the role of religion in society, economics, and foreign policy.

As Taskesenlioglu posits: "During the Refah era, first in line had to be religion. With AKP, religion is not the priority. AKP forms policies based on the conditions and circumstances. While doing politics, religion cannot be number one anymore."⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Rusen Cakir. *Ne Seriat Ne Demokrasi: Refah Partisi'ni Anlamak* (Istanbul: Metis, 1994).

⁴⁹ Taskesenlioglu, Personal interview, AKP Headquarters, Istanbul.

The reformists' propositions pushed the party towards becoming a catch all party, and thus, were met with criticism. As Adams et al. posit, this shift in the party's focus could have led to a loss in electoral support. Yet, on the contrary, the party increased its support drastically. The reformists' strategy to appeal to a larger number of people was successful. The interviews suggest that personal contact with potential voters enhanced their understanding of people's needs. This factor also suggests a break from the issue-based ideological party orbit. The process of splitting into two camps and forming a new party constituted a shift from an ideological party into a catch-all party.

Nureddin Nebati, one of the founders of the party, captures main difference between reformists and traditionalists as follows:

“Being a member of RP meant to be a member of the political representative of the Islamic movement in Turkey. AKP is not the representative, it doesn't situate itself as such, this is very important. It would either be an ideological party, conduct narrow party politics or it would open to the masses, targeting coming to power. I chose the second. RP stayed in the idealist level. We thought we could transform the society. AKP does not try to transform the society. All ideological parties are the same. They target transformation, in the Islamic sense.”⁵⁰

The formation of the two blocs in the party was concurrent with Erdogan's rise in popularity. Traditionally, the Islamic political party ruled in Ankara, where it was founded. The competition for governing the Istanbul municipality strengthened the

⁵⁰ Nureddin Nebati, Personal interview, 2011, AKP Bakirkoy District Office, Istanbul.

Istanbul party organization, which was under Erdogan's control. This disturbed the power dynamics in the party and, as a result, Erdogan's leadership helped to determine the formation of the two different blocs in the party.

Expanding the Electoral Campaign

The diverging political styles first manifested themselves in the framing of the electoral campaigns. Erdogan, the head of the Istanbul branch at the time, decided to run for the position of Mayor of Beyoglu in the 1989 municipal elections, which marked the emergence of the reformists in the Islamic political party.⁵¹ The younger generation in the RP wanted to reach out to different parts of society, rather than only the mosque-going community. They proposed new techniques, such as contacting as many people as they could and telling them about the party. This involved visiting bars and brothels. Kiyiklik suggests: "In 1986, honorable prime minister and us went to places that wouldn't be acceptable to our people."

Nebati explains this political style as follows:

"We were always in close physical contact with the electorate. This is a must have condition. When I became a part of the party in 1991, I thought I was in an army of angels. Then I realized God didn't create us as angels. Also Turkey does not want an army of angels. We experienced politics in the municipalities while doing worldly work, and resolving issues. I entered the party with ideals, and then understood it doesn't work with them."

⁵¹ Beyoglu is a symbolic municipality in Istanbul, considered as the heart of the city.

According to Eraslan, after 1994, the Istanbul organization changed and the social bases adjusted quickly.⁵² “Our difference of opinion was on practical applications.” A veteran of the Milli Gorus parties, Mehmet Elkatmis, similarly stated on the internal factions: “There was no difference in ideas, thoughts. There was difference in methods. Getting younger, not making mistakes. The part of the party that was old and saw the party as his own opposed these.”⁵³

Tayyip Erdogan and the reformist wing he led utilized media to convey their message to the larger population, addressing the non-Islamist sectors of the population as well, to collect votes (Cakir 1994, 16). Cakir claims that reformists might have even been more conservative than the traditionalists in terms of their adherence to Islamism, and proposes that the actual difference between these two groups was not based on their worldview, but on their modus operandi. While the traditionalists accepted new members to the party on the condition that they proved they embraced Islamic lifestyle, reformists gave new members the chance to Islamize during their affiliation with the party. Reformists wanted to open the party to everyone and make it into a catch-all party (Cakir 1994, 77).

As Cakir explains, new ways of conducting politics and electoral campaigning did not imply that the reformists were less religious. In fact, reformists were even more keen on Islamist values than traditionalists in some instances. Even though the *Milli Gorus* movement appeared to make a claim on the inseparability of Islam and politics, they were

⁵² Sibel Eraslan, Personal Interview, 2011, Religious Association Building, Istanbul.

⁵³ Mehmet Elkatmis, Personal Interview, 2012, Turkish Grand National Assembly, Ankara.

becoming successful because they prioritized state matters over religious ones: “by creating projects on substantial matters, the movement is modernizing, maybe even secularizing the religious. Therefore, RP identity in essence is a laic identity polished by Islam” (Cakir 1994, 58-59). This insight from the time RP started its rise demonstrates that the party began to change much earlier than had been apparent in 2002.

The Istanbul branch of the party, under the leadership of Erdogan, proposed new methods of political conduct. During the electoral campaigns, the reformists proposed new policies, such as moving outside of its solid base of religious supporters and opening channels of communication with other parts of society to expand the electorate. The traditional social base of the party did not welcome these proposals, and this opposition led to internal debates. As suggested by the interviews with party officials, these discussions were resolved inside the party and did not create an immediate split.

Aside from the difference of opinion on the general conduct of politics, particularly the design of electoral campaigns, another major issue was the participation of women in party politics.

Internal Disputes: Women

As a conservative party, the RP did not have a women’s branch nor any women members at the beginning of its political life. Later, when women became involved in the party organization and began to work for the electoral campaigns, they impacted the party’s success. Women’s home visits were crucial in paving the way for the RP’s rise to power (Arat 2005; White 2002; Eraslan 2000). Home visits made by party members

during electoral campaigns proved to be a successful model of political organization, enabling the party to reach a larger portion of the electorate, hear their demands, and to explain their platform. As a prominent journalist stated, “RP advocated the economic and social demands of the people, and the main element of the party’s political practices in the suburbs was women” (Hurriyet 1998, March 19). Women were active in the successful electoral campaign for the 1994 local elections—the first notable success of the RP—by winning the two biggest metropolitan municipalities. As of 1995, 18,000 women were organized in the Istanbul branch of the RP (Eraslan 2000, 215). Prior to Erdogan entrance into the 1994 elections for Mayor of Istanbul, increasing the number of women party members was an important as a part of his leadership strategy. Eraslan suggests that Erdogan invited him to establish the women’s branch.

Women were not an integral part of the party organization in its early years, however, and establishing a strong base of women was met with debate. The political participation of women was only ensured after a rocky road of multiple discussions and strong opposition. The history of women in the party begins with the listing of the first member, which, according to the account of Ekrem Erdem, a founding member of the party and a high-ranking official in the AKP government, was coincidental. Huseyin Besli⁵⁴, Erdogan’s colleague since his post as the Mayor of Istanbul, quotes Ekrem Erdem, the current Chair of the Headquarter Organization of the AKP, who stated that the

⁵⁴ *Recep Tayyip Erdogan: Bir Liderin Dogusu*. It is important to note that a current mayor from AKP and a long time politician since his participation in the Milli Gorus movement recommended this book, suggesting that it reflects the subconscious of Milli Gorus.

first woman member joined the party in 1987 by volunteering (2010, 44).⁵⁵ In his anecdote of a house visit, after the father of the house refused to become a member, his daughter volunteered instead. The party officials were too ashamed to tell her that there were no women members. The first involvement of the women's branch in the political campaigns was in 1989.

Criticism against women's active participation in politics was loud and harsh, and the decision to open up women's branches was an issue of contention within the party. As another founding member, Feyzullah Kiyiklik, stated in the field interview, "The women's branches were first established in Istanbul. There were obstacles against this formation. Some criticized arguing 'RP is founding a harem.'"⁵⁶ The strong opposition from the social bases of the party was also reflected in internal discussions.

Yucel Celikbilek, the current Mayor of the Beykoz district in Istanbul, recalled his personal experience with this issue during the field interview. According to his account, due to the conservatism of some party members, neither the women's branches nor the youth branches were welcome in the RP. Besli and Ozbay also mention the contestation over the youth branches. The traditionalist wing, more specifically, the devout Muslims, opposed the active participation of women in politics.

As reflected in another field interview with a founding member, in order to settle these disagreements, the party formed a committee of respected Muslim experts (*hodjas*)

⁵⁵ Sibel Eraslan, who managed the first political involvement of the women branch in the 1989 elections, stated that the first female member was actually listed in 1983. Personal Interview, 2011.

⁵⁶ Feyzullah Kiyiklik, Personal interview, 2012, Office, Istanbul.

to deliberate upon the appropriateness of women's participation in politics in Islam.

Although it was announced at the end of these meetings that there was no obstacle within the rules of Islam, conservative members continued in their opposition to it. Multiple interviewees stated during the field research that women's active participation in politics was among the major points of disagreements among the different groups within the party.

During Erdogan's campaign in the 1989 local elections, the women's branches in the provincial and district organizations were established with increasing momentum. Some party members, however, were strongly opposed to the participation of women in politics. The party decided to hold meetings with some figures who had knowledge of the appropriateness of this practice to Islam. Along with the participation of the board of directors, theologians discussed this issue and decided that if certain conditions were met and procedures were followed, women could engage in political activities and electoral campaigning.

Tevfik Goksu, Mayor of Esenler and longtime official in the Islamic political party, was in charge of resolving the issue of women's active participation at the time. Goksu stated that the members of the RP agreed on this new strategy and that the issue was resolved internally.

The issue of women's participation created serious discussions to such an extent that an arbitration board of authorities on Islamic jurisprudence, including Hayrettin Karaman, Rasit Kucuk and Abdulaziz Bayindir, was formed to decide upon the matter.

After discussing amongst themselves, they determined that women could be involved in politics given that they abode by some principles. Party officials reached out to the mosque-goers on this issue by saying that women were allowed to communicate Islamic knowledge (*teblig*). Hulusi Senturk suggested that, even after the board made its decision, negative reactions from the conservative religious bloc persisted. They continued to discuss whether it was acceptable to shake hands with a woman.

“Even though the hodjas supported to a large extent, there was a conservative inclination in the society, based on traditions. Connected to this religious understanding, there is a women’s honor issue that transformed into religion. This understanding was integrated from customs, which was not easy to challenge. This is the basis of the controversy.”⁵⁷

This council also decided that members could communicate with people outside of the mosque-going community to convey their message. Kiyiklik stated that there were discussions about the formation of women’s branches, and that the religious members were against their participation.⁵⁸

However, this did not end the reactions of the more conservative sections of the party. There were discussions on whether it was appropriate for party members to visit venues, such as bars, to increase votes. In Senturk’s words, it was not easy to challenge

⁵⁷ Hulusi Senturk, Personal Interview, 2010, AKP Istanbul Headquarters, Istanbul. Besides being one of the founding members of RP, Senturk is one of the founders of the Islamist movement in Turkey, and he worked for the party until 2011.

⁵⁸ Feyzullah Kiyiklik, Personal interview, 2012, Office, Istanbul.

these ossified norms based on religion, customs, and mores. The Istanbul group argued that the RP was a political party and its aim needed to be to gain as many votes as possible.⁵⁹ “Therefore, ideology is fine, yet as a party operating in a democratic system, we need to meet with every potential voter” (Senturk 2010).

The Mayor of Sultanbeyli, Huseyin Keskin, who has been actively involved with the party since the late 1990s, also stated that some members of the party organization did not want women to actively participate in politics, yet “today everyone agrees that they had an important role during the 1994 campaign.” Keskin also singled out the Istanbul party organization as the best group in the party.⁶⁰ Likewise, a long-term politician in the party underlined the importance of the Istanbul organization and referred to how successful it was “in terms of political work, utilizing information, motivating the organization, recruiting women for the electoral campaigns.”⁶¹

During the lead-up to the local elections in 1989, Erdogan introduced new practices to the party. This was the first time women in the party participated in the field of politics. Erdogan embraced different strategies for different parts of Beyoglu, which included sending women wearing a chador to some neighborhoods while sending uncovered women to others (2010, 44-45). These strategies reveal the pragmatic stance of this rising leader and the Istanbul organization he managed. Around the Cihangir district, uncovered university students conducted public opinion polls and disseminated

⁵⁹ A meeting was organized in 1990 to discuss Erdogan’s new political methods. After this meeting, the Istanbul model was coined as an unofficial concept (Besli and Ozbay 2010, 61).

⁶⁰ Huseyin Keskin, Personal Interview, Sultanbeyli Municipality, Istanbul.

⁶¹ Fazli Kilic, Personal Interview, Kagithane Municipality, Istanbul.

information about the party. This was also not taken well by the devout Muslim followers. According to Besli, a conservative newspaper published a pejorative account of this new strategy, claiming, “RP employs prostitutes in the elections” (2010, 47).

According to the person who led the formation of the women’s branches, the participation of women in party affairs came at the request of Erdogan.⁶² Bahri Zengin, one of the developers of the *Milli Gorus* ideology, proposed a follow-up project to bring together university students and pious women to form the women’s branch in 1989 (quoted in Besli and Ozbay 2010, 65). Eraslan stated that, before these reformist moves, women and youth listened to the speeches of the party leaders from basements. Following these changes, women were seated in the front rows of party meetings (Besli and Ozbay 2010, 66). In 1991, Erdogan called upon women to acquire driving licenses and to participate in civil defense classes. During his term as the chairman of the Istanbul organization, women’s branches were founded in 32 districts. Throughout the 863 neighborhoods, women were organized in 805 of them (Besli and Ozbay 2010, 66).

The field interviews suggest that Erdogan followed progressive policies when he was in the RP. The chair of the Beykoz district, who first participated in politics as a member of the AKP youth branch, has also argued that Erdogan brought women into the party for active participation.⁶³ On the participation of women, most of the interviews suggested that Erdogan took the lead.

⁶² Sibel Eraslan, Personal Interview, 2011, Religious Association Building, Istanbul.

⁶³ Mustafa Gurkan, Personal Interview, 2010, AKP Beykoz District Organization.

Merve Kavakci worked for the party during the RP and FP periods and became the first member of the parliament to wear a headscarf, which stirred significant national controversy. Kavakci stated in the field interview that the first time women actively participated in the RP was during the 1994 electoral campaign. In their minds, they were contributing to the cause of Islamic politics⁶⁴ She summarized the role of women in the RP as follows:

“RP politicized women. There were around 200.000 volunteers. The opportunity RP granted to women to participate in politics provided the housewife with an identity. These practices empowered them; political activity gave them a mission. This in turn transformed the inside of the households. Women from RP made their husbands RP followers. The saying became known: working as RP women. On the other hand, there were criticisms, and they were correct. Questions were posed: you worked in the party, yet why aren't you in the party ranks? When FP was established, it had a democracy and equality discourse, and justice in its program. So it became an issue and there were demands to give these women the right to represent. During FP, the Islamists included women in the official party administration for the first time.”

A deputy chairman in the Istanbul party organization defined the role of women in the party as follows: “In the neighborhood organizations, women try to reach and help everyone, and they gather necessary information for the district manager. Men, on the other hand, are not idealist; they think more in the framework of *realpolitik*. Societal work is considered to be the job of women. Women feel happy when they make someone happy.”

⁶⁴ Merve Kavakci, Personal Interview, 2011, Private Office, Istanbul.

However, there are conflicting accounts of the political participation of women. Although her election has been attributed to the reformist proposals, Kavakci's inauguration did not go smoothly: Because she was wearing a headscarf, she was not allowed to take the oath to be a member of the parliament. Kavakci explained:

“The reason why I couldn't take the oath that day is the reformists. The party was going through a transformation. Erbakan was banned, and Erdogan was in the process of being imprisoned. There was the idea of Erdogan founding a party. There was a big ambiguity. We saw dissidence because of Erbakan hoca keeping his counsel very limited. Hoca accepted Cemil Cicek for instance, who was a pioneer of the reformists, and he was the one first to leave later. Erbakan was also very supportive for women to work in the party. Yet he was represented very badly, although he was a progressive leader. There is not a binary opposition there.”⁶⁵ Kavakci noted, “Erdogan is a very patriarchal man. He is the same person as he was in 1994.”

Similarly, a party official in the SP suggests:

“The idea for the establishment of the women's branch in the party organization belongs to Erbakan. He believed that women had to be in every sphere. We worked in the campaigns and also received trainings. Erbakan gave the directions for these practices. The progress was very fast; it left its mark on the movement. It wasn't a big issue in the organization. There were ones who asked how would it be possible. Erbakan believed it wouldn't be possible to be successful without women. AKP women's branch is different, it is more hybrid and more liberal.”⁶⁶

⁶⁵ Merve Kavakci, Personal Interview,

⁶⁶ Personal Interview, 2010, official did not want her name to be mentioned.

On the other hand, Erol Erdogan, a prominent figure in the short-lived People's Voice Party (*Halkın Sesi Partisi*, HAS Parti) and later a member of the AKP, stated that "Strengthening women's branches, and visiting houses created discussions in the party yet it didn't lead to a major fragmentation.⁶⁷ However, this discussion probably still continues in the SP." This also suggests that the conservatives had an issue with allowing women to participate and opening the campaign to the larger society.

Senturk stated that between the reformists and the traditionalists, there were ideological as well as tactical differences. A prominent, fanatical block in the party opposed the active participation of women in politics.

These clashes inside the party were temporarily resolved, and the party became more successful in gathering support. However, especially by the time of the February 28 process, these clashes had become more apparent. This created a critical juncture that required the party to decide how to pursue politics. After the February 28 process and the ban on the RP and Erbakan, these obscure differences of opinion and internal divisions resulted in the formation of two parties: the Felicity Party (*Saadet Partisi*, SP) and the AKP. This fragmentation ended in the marginalization of the SP, which preserved and bolstered its Islamist rhetoric, and the rise and victory of the AKP, which claimed to have taken off the Milli Gorus shirt, pointing to a clear split with its past. By the time the AKP came to power, the cadres to a large extent had cut back on utilizing Islamic rhetoric in their speeches, stressing respect for other lifestyles and stating the importance of

⁶⁷ Erol Erdogan, Personal Interview, 2011, Office, Istanbul.

secularism. The balance of power between the two factions was altered with the rise of a new leader, who was powerful, skillful, and charismatic enough to challenge Erbakan's monopoly of power within the party.

Erdogan's Rise to Power and the Formation of the Party Cleavages

The internal division in the RP and its subsequent split into two parties is enmeshed within Erdogan's rise to leadership. Leadership is a fundamental factor in the transformation of the Islamic political party in Turkey. Erdogan has preserved his leadership power to this day, and even the general elections of 2015 have been counted as a victory for him. He is one of the most important leaders in Turkish history, and perhaps one of the most criticized as well. His role in Turkish political history and the history of the Islamic political party is crucial.

Erdogan was an active participant in political organizations since he was a young student. He was the Middle School President of the National Turkish Student Union (*Milli Turk Talebe Birliđi*, MTTB), which was controlled by nationalist-conservative students at the time. While this organization was not officially connected to the RP, it was included in the party's social bases. Students attending religious schools would join this union, and it was also a place for anti-communist youth (Cakir and Calmuk 2001, 21). Erdogan rose quickly and steadily towards the higher ranks of the party. Later, he became the President of the Youth Branch of the National Salvation Party, first in Beyoglu, and then in Istanbul (Cakir and Calmuk 2001, 25). During this period in Turkish history, political activists and youth movements were highly organized and

active. The 1970s in Turkey were marked by violence in the streets, mainly amongst the leftist and the nationalist movements, as the Islamic movement mostly avoided violent confrontations. The main groups engaging in violence in the streets in the wake of the 1980 coup were also the leftist organizations and the ultranationalists. The Islamist youth was also organized, and in 1976, on top of the MTTB and RP's youth branch, with the permission of Erbakan, a group called Akincilar, a radical wing of the Islamic youth movement, was formed. Erdogan, during this time of political turmoil, was the head of the youth branch at the RP and was able to manage these different factions of the Islamic youth movement.

Cemal Ussak stated that the Islamist groups started organizing after Erbakan founded the Milli Gorus movement. The youth, Islamist groups, and ultranationalist groups, were organizing in the high schools for religious vocational training (*Imam Hatip Lisesi*, IHL).⁶⁸ The MTTB organized nationally over time and it was an "important power supply and meeting point for the 'Islamic community,' the community that takes Islam to the axis of its life. Abdullah Gul and Recep Tayyip Erdogan were among the people who have been through MTTB's stall, including my friends and me. MTTB was organized in both middle schools and high schools."⁶⁹

The 1970s also ended with a military coup that banned all of the parties and their

⁶⁸ Cemal Ussak, Personal Interview, 2011, Journalists and Writers Association, Istanbul.

⁶⁹ As stated by various interviewees, the young members of the Islamist movement in Turkey read the translated works of the Middle Eastern Islamist leaders. Iran revolution is considerably the most influential event that contributed to the ideational background of the youth organization. The works of the Islamists were translated first in the 1960s, yet at the time, there was not yet a political organization.

leaders from politics. The Motherland Party (*Anavatan Partisi*, ANAP), at the time of the military coup, became a very popular center-right party that appealed to religious people. Turgut Ozal, the leader of the party, had good relations and connections with some of the religious orders, and his relationship to the Iskenderpasa order was known. Up until the AKP entered the political scene, Ozal's ANAP was the last political party in Turkey that could secure enough votes for a one-party government. The Islamic political party returned to official politics in 1983.

After the foundation of the RP and following his post in the youth organization, Erdogan became the Beyoglu district manager. By 1985, he had already become the head of the Istanbul provincial organization and a member of the central administrative council. His rapid climb through the ranks of the party followed an interest in running for office, and Erdogan entered his bid for candidacy in the Parliament in 1986. By that time, he had started the discussion about the need for change and the search for new methods to expand the narrow societal base of the MSP organization.

During his campaign in the national elections, Erdogan wanted to enter a coffeehouse owned by members of the Menzil religious order. However, he was not welcomed. The owner of the coffee house turned him away saying they would vote for another party. Seeing this, the owner of the drinking house across the street invited them in for tea and Erdogan went there with his crowd (Cakir and Calmuk 2001, 54). At the time, this was quite a radical move. The traditional electorate for the Islamic political party until then was composed of the part of the society that regularly went to mosques, which mostly included male, conservative Islamists. Kiyiklik, who was with Erdogan

during this campaign, recounts that the Istanbul organization started working with this voter base in 1985. Kiyiklik is one of the founders of AKP, and has been in the Islamic political party for a long time, working with Erdogan since 1984. They transmitted their messages to people, who found them to be reasonable. In 1986, Erdogan and his team “went to places that wouldn’t be acceptable to our people.”⁷⁰

After his failed attempt to enter the Parliament in 1986, Erdogan entered the race of the local elections for Mayor of Beyoglu in 1989. He lost in these elections as well, and he and the party were suspected of fraud regarding the counting of the votes, although this was not proven. Nonetheless, this race further sharpened his political ambitions.

With his popularity rising, Erdogan was climbing the ladder of the party hierarchy quickly, whilst transforming the political methods that the party used. The general rules he posted as the Director of the Istanbul provincial organization were as follows:

Table 9 RP Istanbul Organization, Rules of Conduct

RP member is not a hated, but a loved person. You will not be sullen.
Don’t be alarming. Be encouraging.
Don’t make it hard. Don’t show the hardships. Show the solution. Tell sweetly.
Don’t be judgmental. Be forgiving. We are not judges. You don’t have the right to call anyone an infidel.
Whoever holds the power in the kitchen is the government in Turkey. If the

⁷⁰ Feyzullah Kiyiklik, Personal interview, 2012, Office, Istanbul.

housewife says RP, then the whole house supports RP.

Greet everyone. Don't forget people in your apartment, in your street. If you greet them Selamu Aleykum and they do not respond, that means they don't like it. Say hello instead. If they don't respond, then say good day. If they still don't understand maybe they are Corc (Turkish writing of George). Say hello, good morning (in English) (Cakir and Calmuk 2001, 50).

These rules summarize the reforms Erdogan initiated in the party. Opening the channels of dialogue with all members of the society, using a soft language and aspiring to pass the messages along to the listener, not using a harsh rhetoric and frightening people, offering solutions to their everyday problems and respecting and supporting women, particularly the housewife. This has been the recipe beyond the RP's success, smoothing the way for Erdogan's leadership, and the source of AKP's success as well.

These rules summarize the reforms Erdogan initiated in the party. Opening the channels of dialogue with all members of society, using soft language and aspiring to pass the messages along to the listener, not using a harsh rhetoric and frightening people, but offering solutions to their everyday problems and respecting and supporting women, particularly housewives. This has been the recipe beyond the RP's success, paved the way for Erdogan's leadership, and served as the source of AKP's success as well.

Kiyiklik posited that the party first began to fracture in 1989-1990. The Istanbul organization suggested creating a peaceful atmosphere, avoiding arguments with the

different sectors of the society, and embracing everyone from different religions and religious sects. Their principles were “respecting freedom of thought and expression, yet doing this without harming others in society.” However, the electoral base did not accept this and the pious supporters objected these proposals claiming that this was *kufur*, a religious term meaning insulting and falling out of religion.

Numerous members of the AKP mentioned that the Istanbul organization led the reformist wing of the Islamic party. Celikbilek suggests that when Tayyip Erdogan became the Mayor of the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality, his group was referred to as “the Istanbul group.” Some interviewees refer to this group as “the Istanbul school.” The Istanbul group proposed reforms to the Headquarters of the RP in Ankara, which raised discussions in the party going back to the 1980s. In 1994, the members of this group decided to directly contact the grassroots.⁷¹

Besli and Ozbay argue that the objections raised by this oppositionist group increased over time. There was criticism of the traditional way of doing politics in the party as irrational, its discourse as not inclusive of the whole country, some of its practices, such as removing one’s shoes before entering the party organization building, as “weird and wrong,” and its resemblance to a religious order rather than a political party (2010, 42). The reformist-traditionalist differentiation became visible at the FP 2000 convention.⁷²

⁷¹ Yucel Celikbilek, Personal interview, 2010, Beykoz Municipality, Istanbul.

⁷² The FP convention is one of the determinative events in the history of the Islamic political party. In this convention, which was convened after the processes of state repression on the party, the movement and the

In 1991, Erdogan entered the elections once more as a candidate for the Parliament. This time, although he won the popular vote, because Turkey had a preferential voting system in place at the time, he lost based on the calculations of the votes after the election. Erdogan was not deterred, however, and he went up for the role of Mayor of Istanbul in the subsequent local elections. In this race, women for the first time started working in the field (Cakir and Calmuk 2001, 57). In 1993, a year before the elections, Erdogan was chanting to the masses at the anniversary of the conquest of Istanbul, 'Insallah we will conquer Istanbul once more' (Cakir and Calmuk, 59). His slogan for the race was 'Tamam Insallah', meaning, 'It's done, with the permission of God.' The posters with this slogan were spread out all around the city right before the elections. This slogan had a clear message that he would get the job done, and he would do it with God's help.



leader of the movement, for the first time there were two members up for being the leader of the party. Recai Kutan represented the traditionalists and Abdullah Gul represented the reformists. Gul could not win the elections. The split of the party followed one year after the convention.

The internal fragmentation of the party made its first substantial appearance during the process of determining who would run for the mayoral elections for the RP. While the Istanbul organization supported their head, Erdogan, Erbakan had another candidate in mind, Ali Coskun (Cakir and Calmuk 2001, 60). The headquarters did not expect pressure from inside the party, which caused friction, as Kiyiklik states. Some members of the organization were “kissing the hands of Erbakan,” or acting out of loyalty to him. “When the provincial organization emerged, some wanted to eliminate it.” Even the fragmentation between the two generations of the RP was formed around the new rising leader Erdogan, who was mentioned in all of the field interviews as an important factor in this change.

The party administration decided to conduct a survey of party members to determine the candidate, and the results showed support for Erdogan as well. The strong organization Erdogan had created in Istanbul was paying off. Erbakan approved of his candidacy, and his campaign attracted the attention of the press (Cakir and Calmuk 2001, 61). The power struggle within the party continued, with multiple candidates contesting limited spots in the general elections and the central party organization.

Another point of internal disagreement raised during the interviews was the expectation of absolute loyalty to Erbakan. Given the importance of leadership, the reformists needed to create a coalition under the new leader, Erdogan, to establish the AKP. Senturk claims that Erbakan saw himself as the leader of the Islamic world, yet some saw him instead as a political leader and refused to pledge their allegiance to him. These members were bothered by the tendency of old people to repeatedly run as

candidates for MEPs. “We were a team that started working after the Morning Prayer until 1 am at night, we needed dynamic candidates” (Senturk 2010, Personal interview). This also refers to the generational conflict in the party: the traditionalists were from the older generation that had created the Islamic political party, while the reformists were from the younger generation that challenged the existing power structures of the party and suggested new ways of conducting politics.

Understanding fragmentation within the Islamic party requires a look at these two different generations and their intellectual backgrounds. In the 1970s, politically-engaged Islamic youth encountered the work of Turkish intellectuals, such as Necip Fazil Kısakurek, as well as translated works of foreign Islamic intellectuals, including Hasan al-Banna, Sayyid Qutb, and Abul ala Mawdudi. The circulation of magazines was also widespread wherever Islamic thinking was developing in Turkey. Around the time of the 1980 coup, foreign translations became widespread (Senturk 2010, Personal interview). Hence, the party’s younger generation developed a new political understanding outside of the Milli Gorus movement (Besli and Ozbay 2010, 29).

According to Huseyin Besli and Omer Ozbay, Tayyip Erdogan’s thinking developed in the mid- to late 1970s. His membership in MTTB from 1969 to 1976 influenced his early political and intellectual thinking. In 1975, Erdogan met Necip Fazil Kısakurek, who was critical of the Milli Gorus movement (Cakir 1994, 57). Besli argues that Erdogan’s thinking never overlapped completely with the classical Milli Gorus movement, which demanded unconditional obedience (2010, 29). Thus, a group that

thought outside the bounds of traditional Islam was formed (Senturk 2010, Personal interview).

This intellectual divergence was visible as early as 1978, during the party convention of the MSP. In 1973, the MSP won 48 seats in the Parliament and became a coalition partner in a government under the leadership of the CHP (with Bulent Ecevit). In 1977, however, the MSP could only secure 24 seats, which led to internal discussions. A group of party members asked Erbakan to replace the party leadership and to rule the party with a new outlook. When Erbakan remained silent, this group prepared an alternative list of MEP candidates for the 1978 convention (Besli and Ozbay 2010, 42).

The traditionalist wing was made up of the founding members of the Islamic political party. Senturk asserts that, until the 1970s, Islamist thinking had been based on Sufism. Thus, these two groups had different backgrounds and understandings going into the 1990s, but they did hold any discussions to resolve these differences. Senturk argues that the issues in the party began in 1994, when the RP achieved its first significant political victory. Contrary to the period from 1997 to 2001, however, because party members were taking up new posts in the government, there was no time left for discussion (Senturk 2010, Personal interview). This development reveals how party cadres were affected by being elected the governing party. The intra-party conflict and the internal divisions did not surface until after the February 28 military intervention.

Under the leadership of Erdogan, the reformist wing of the RP grew stronger. Against the wishes of the Headquarters and the Istanbul Provincial Organization, Erdogan explained that his candidacy in the electoral race for the Mayor of the Beyoglu

Municipality was an opportunity to demonstrate that the barrier between society and the party could be eradicated. “If we could find a way and a method to communicate with society, we would become the number one party” (Besli and Ozbay 2010, 43).

According to a news dossier provided by Sule Cizmeci, Erdogan entered the mayoral race of 1994 with 75 thousand campaign workers by his side (Milliyet 1994, February 15). Erdogan advised the propagandists to always smile and be friendly, and to refrain from intimidating, passing judgment, acting superior to others, or spitting on the ground (Cakir 1994, 82-83). Cakir questioned in 1994 whether holding government office takes away from the Islamist identity of Islamist movements. As Senturk and Celikbilek realized after having personal contacts with the constituency, addressing daily issues decreases the importance of ideology and focuses their efforts on resolving everyday problems.

The RP owes much of its success at the time to opening communication channels with the potential electorate and mobilizing women party members and supporters. Reaching out to the electorate began with the idea that it would be beneficial for the party to talk with people whether they were religious or not. The electoral campaigns of the Istanbul organizations allowed the party to form more relationships with the electorate, a dynamic that continues to characterize the party to this day.

White examined in detail how the Islamist movement was mobilized and formed relationships with the RP government and municipalities, presenting the formation of strong relationships with the electorate as well as solid support for Erdogan. An interview conducted in Umraniye, Istanbul, with RP supporters posits an important aspect of the

relationship between political parties and social movements in Turkey. As a response to White's question on what would happen if the RP were to be banned, the interviewee states, "If they close the party, then a few politicians lose their jobs; that's all. It has no effect on us. We're a social movement, not a party" (White 2002, 5). White describes the perception of Erdogan in the eyes of party supporters as that of a "rockstar."

The internal differences of opinion over the ideological politics of the RP, the opening up to a larger electorate, and the participation of women in party politics solidified the traditionalist and reformist camps. The threat posed by Erdogan to the traditional party leader Erbakan accelerated the process and led to the formation of two distinct groups. However, the internal split and the power dynamics would not have led to party fragmentation were it not for the February 28 process, which served as a critical juncture. The following chapter describes this process and the transformation of power dynamics and alliances in the founding of the AKP.

THE FEBRUARY 28 PROCESS: AN ALTERNATIVE ON THE RISE

The Islamic political party fragmented into traditionalist and reformist camps, which disagreed on party politics and electoral campaign strategies. The internal fragmentation within the RP began during the 1989 local elections and intensified with the party's rise to power. Disputes over the active participation of women in the party and the opening of the party up to more people in society to acquire more votes were settled during the RP era. Although these dividing lines had faded, they remained dormant as a result of the party's experience with diverging views on politics.

On February 28, 1997, the National Security Council, which was mostly made up of military officers, presented the RP and the True Path Party (*Dogruyol Partisi*, DYP) coalition government with a list of actions that were needed to protect the secular state (Cizre and Cinar 2003).⁷³ This intervention was highly consequential for the Islamic political party.

The dividing lines the February 28 process exacerbated had already been revealed during the Virtue Party (*Fazilet Partisi*, FP) congress in 2000. The congress assembled after the RP and Erbakan were banned from politics, and the tense, contested elections for party leader were visible to the public. The following year, the Islamic political party split

⁷³ The coalition government was the 54th government in Turkey. It was founded on June 28, 1996 and resigned on June 30, 1997. https://www.tbmm.gov.tr/kutuphane/e_kaynaklar_kutuphane_hukumetler.html Members of the cabinet were https://www.basbakanlik.gov.tr/Forms/_Global/_Government/pg_Cabinets.aspx

into two different parties, the Felicity Party (*Saadet Partisi*, SP) and the Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkinma Partisi*, AKP). This chapter analyzes the developments leading up to this fragmentation.

The dissertation argues that the February 28, 1997, military intervention was the main catalyst for this unprecedented rupture in the Islamic political party. The dissertation argues that the February 28, 1997, military intervention was the main catalyst for this unprecedented rupture in the Islamic political party. The transformation of the Islamic political party from an ideological party into a party with broad appeal occurred as a result of the February 28 military intervention, which resurfaced and crystallized the traditionalist and reformist camps within the party.

The February 28 intervention was an external crisis that pressed the Islamic political actors to reconsider their political strategy, which led to a critical juncture. Although the issues of internal disagreement had been resolved within the party, the fault lines had formed. February 28 pushed the party to a breaking point. This chapter conceptualizes the February 28 intervention as an external shock that had a tremendous impact on the trajectory of the Islamic political party.

A critical juncture is “a period of significant change, which typically occurs in distinct ways in different countries and which is hypothesized to produce distinct legacies” (Collier and Collier 1991, 29). It is a “choice point when a particular option is adopted among two or more alternatives” (Mahoney 2002, 8).

February 28 represents a critical juncture because it changed the course of events and the fate of the Islamic political party. It created a “choice point” for both the

traditionalists and the reformists and led them to pursue different paths. In fact, this split proved determinative for the broader political scene in Turkey (Mahoney 2002). The establishment and rise of the AKP also crashed the multi-party system in Turkey. The national threshold requiring parties to achieve at least 10 percent of the vote to enter the parliament pushed the weaker parties out, while the reformist wing consolidated power amongst right-wing parties.

February 28 initiated a period where shifting alliances reconstructed the political game. The changing preferences of internal and external actors led to a period of coalition rebuilding. The inclinations of internal actors diverged amongst the traditionalists and the reformists, and their preferences shifted in different directions. The external actors, supporters of the party, reevaluated their coalition with the Islamic political party, since the party had drawn so much criticism and negative reactions from the secular establishment.

The antecedent conditions created an opportune environment for political actors, enabling them to propose alternative paths forward for the political party. Turkey, a democratizing country that held free and fair elections, provided a structure suitable for political actors to become members of parties and to hold office in the parliament. The reformists had argued for the implementation of new strategies to appeal to a larger electorate, and the political system was a good fit for their aspirations. The supporters of the Islamic political party were also important actors in this process. Islamic civil society was also growing, as Anatolian businessmen were searching for new markets. Economic

liberalization also created new economic actors that wanted to integrate into the national and global economy.

These social and economic actors grew closer to the mindset of the reformists, and this process helped them to forge a new party with the reformists. On the other hand, supporters of the Islamic political party considered democracy to be a Western imposition and desired a Sharia state. As a result, some of these supporters aligned with a radical Islamic political party by joining the SP.⁷⁴

A nation-wide public opinion poll conducted by the Turkish Economic and Social Studies Foundation (TESEV) sheds light on this issue. 21 percent of people in Turkey stated that they wanted a Sharia-based state in the 1999 study. In the 1970s and 1980s, by comparison, this figure was around 7 percent (Carkoglu and Toprak 2000). The Turkish Social Economic Political Research Foundation (TUSES) noted a similar trend in support for a Sharia-based state, with about 20 percent in favor in 1995, about 27 percent in favor in 1997, and about 20 percent in favor in 1998.⁷⁵

The military intervention and the systemic changes it led to created a space for party officials who had already aspired to explore another course for the party. The juncture operated as a decision point for the traditionalists and reformists, and it had a different impact on these two factions. The military intervention presented the Islamic political party and party officials with three options: radicalization, preservation of the

⁷⁴ While the SP continued as a marginalized party that preserves the frame of references to Islam and increased nationalism, a lot of the radicals embraced the new path of AKP. Some of the Islamist radicals first started holding government offices during RP rule, beginning with the municipalities and they learned to be a part of the system.

⁷⁵ http://tesev.org.tr/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Turkiyede_Din_Toplum_Ve_Siyaset.pdf

status quo, and transformation to adapt to the system. These options were also important for the economic and civil society actors who supported the party. Suitable antecedent conditions, and the support of critical electoral bases, strengthened the preferences of the reformists for the option of transformation.

Shifting Alliances

Following the first year of the RP-DYP government, the uneasy secular establishment took action with the February 28 military memorandum, which imposed strict regulations on social, political, and economic activities within the larger Islamic community. This military intervention and the court case that followed for banning the RP were based on the rhetoric and policies of the RP, which was embellished with Islamist tendencies. This unrest and pressure from the NSC led to the dissolution of the 54th government in June 1997.

A lawsuit was filed on the basis that the party threatened the laic character of the Turkish state. The case resulted in the Constitutional Court ban of the RP in 1998. Erbakan and five party officials were banned from engaging in political activity for five years.⁷⁶ The ban on the party and its leader was a breaking point, which called the party's political methods into question. These processes, incidentally, generated suitable conditions for the reformers. Because the leader of the Milli Gorus movement, who had established the party, could not engage in political activity, a power vacuum in the party was created. This provided an opportunity for a different group to shape the distribution

⁷⁶ Decision of the Constitutional Court as posted in the state newspaper
<http://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/arsiv/23266.pdf>

of power. The political actors in the party who supported Erbakan's leadership and held a radical stance towards campaign-related issues and the narrative of the party were slowly cast aside. Along with the disturbed power balance, alliances began to shift.

These developments prompted supporters to reconsider the pillars of the party, while also prompting social and economic actors to reconsider whether the party was advancing or harming their interests.

The internal fragmentation of the RP, which began with the first electoral race Erdogan participated in, continued to widen following the state repression of February 28. Prior to the foundation of the AKP, a coalition emerged that supported the leadership of Erdogan. Erbakan came to be viewed by party followers as an obstacle to achieving the party's political objectives.

This lack of leadership was reflected in the 2000 FP party convention, which was marked by speeches delivered by Recai Kutan, representing the older and more conservative wing of the party, and Abdullah Gul, representing the younger and more reformist wing.⁷⁷ This race to elect the leader of the FP resulted in a victory for Kutan. Yet, after the party was banned in 2001, it soon disintegrated. Traditionalists who stayed loyal to the Erbakan legacy under SP rule quickly lost the electoral base of the party.

Since 1999, the reformists had been motivated to increase their electoral base and become a catch-all party. With the intervention, the perception emerged that it was not possible to pursue the traditional path anymore. "Normal circumstances" would not allow for this change of strategy and positioning. Yet, under the new conditions, the reformists'

⁷⁷ The FP Congress, 2000

power increased rapidly (Mahoney 2002, 8). This led to a completely new era for the Islamic political party and the Turkish political system as a whole. February 28 acted as an exogenous shock that gave impetus to the formation of the new party, the AKP.

Military-State Relations Post-1980 Coup D'état

To contextualize the February 28 process and understand its importance and impact, it is essential to revisit military-state relations in Turkey. The 1982 constitution was written under the military government established following the 1980 coup d'état.⁷⁸ Although the military government held power for only three years, its legacy is still visible in the constitution and the institutions it founded to control society by a centralized state.

Until 2003, the military could directly intervene in the state and the government through the National Security Council (NSC) (Bac 2005, 26).⁷⁹ The Turkish military withheld political power from the elected government. Under this regime, the NSC was strengthened and gained substantial powers over the political system and the government. Under the 1982 constitution, the NSC was organized as follows:

⁷⁸ The Constitution https://global.tbmm.gov.tr/docs/constitution_en.pdf

⁷⁹ As a part of the reforms enacted for initiating the EU accession process, the role, responsibilities and scope of authority of the NSC was revised.

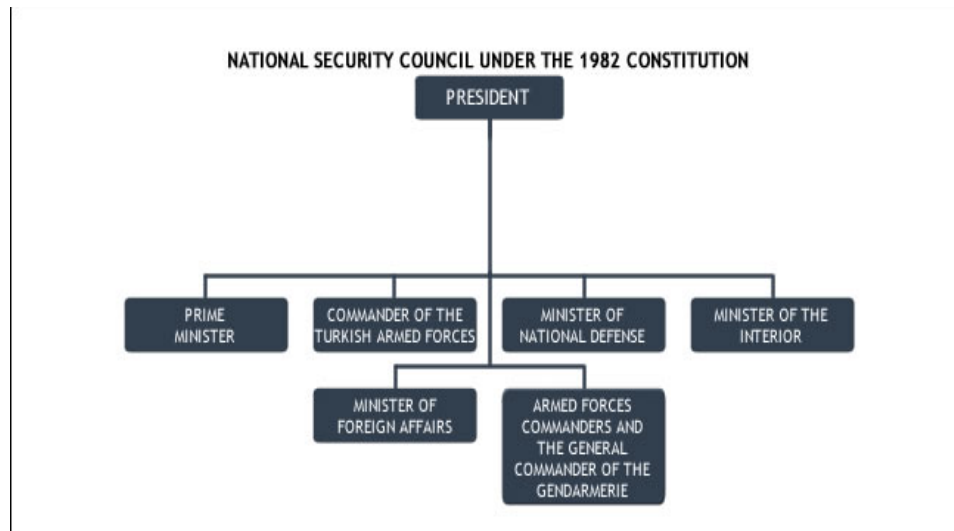


Figure 10 National Security Council Organization Chart

Until the passage of reforms under the framework of fulfilling criteria for opening accession negotiations with the European Union, the NSC was an integral part of this mechanism of military’s control over the government, possessing considerable powers.

Among the duties of the council were:

“To determine the measures that are deemed imperative for the preservation of the existence and independence of the state, territorial integrity and indivisibility of the country and the maintenance of peace and security of the society”

“To determine the measures necessary for preserving the constitutional order, maintaining the national unity and integrity and bringing together the Turkish nation around the national ideals and values in accordance with the principles and reforms of Atatürk; counteract the internal and external threats directed against these aspects; in order to eliminate these threats, to determine strategies and guidelines as well as opinions,

requirements and necessary precautions regarding the planning and implementation services”⁸⁰

The NSC imparted its decisions to the Council of Ministers. These decisions were not advisory and the government had to abide by them.⁸¹ On February 28, 1997, when the National Security Council presented the coalition government with a long list of decisions concerning not only the government and the Islamic political party, but also the broader sphere of Islamic actors, this was a direct intervention of the military into the conduct of government. February 28 has been coined as a *soft coup*, since the military did not depose or displace the government. However, the move had serious implications, and may aptly be described as a “military intervention.” The implications for Islamic political actors and the Turkish political party system and politics were extensive. The February 28 process is the period that followed the 1997 NSC meeting.

Path to the February 28 Process

The military extended its control over the state to any political organization that posed a threat to the unity and the laic character of the Turkish Republic. Although the military government, which was in power during the Cold War era, had identified communism as a key issue and established a Turkish-Islamic synthesis to counteract it, Islamist politics targeting the regime became a major concern with the rise of the Islamic political party (Yavuz 2003, 69).

⁸⁰ <http://www.mgk.gov.tr/en/index.php/secretariat-general/about-us>

⁸¹ The formation, duties, and power of the National Security Council were changed in the 2003, and its role changed into being solely advisory.

The RP quickly increased its share of the vote; first in the 1994 local elections and then in the 1995 national elections.⁸² The RP had acquired enough power to form a coalition government, and after a long process of negotiations, the RP became the head of the Refahiyol coalition government. This development heightened concerns amongst the secular establishment that the Islamic political party wanted to change the laic regime. The rising power of the party drew attention to the Islamic motifs in the speeches of the party officials and leader as well as party policies. Some examples include the stress on the education of university students wearing a headscarf, establishing economic cooperation with Islamic countries, and countering the threat of Zionism.

According to the 1982 constitution, the Turkish Republic was defined as a democratic, laic, social state based on the rule of law. This laicism was centered on the principle that religion could not be a part of state affairs or politics. This was ensured by state regulation of religious practices through the Directorate of Religious Affairs.

In the case that led to the political ban of the RP, evidence was presented that defined the party as a threat to the laic state. The opening clause focused on the lifting of the headscarf ban at institutions of higher education, specifically, the suggestion by Erbakan that university presidents should salute students who wore the headscarf. In this speech, Erbakan stated:

⁸² Official percentage of votes on the website of National Elections Board (Yuksekk Secim Kurulu-YSK) http://www.ysk.gov.tr/ysk/faces/HaberDetay?training_id=YSKPWCN1_4444010920&_afLoop=6441065571365017&_afWindowMode=0&_afWindowId=1brmxokurx_1#%40%3F_afWindowId%3D1brmxokurx_1%26_afLoop%3D6441065571365017%26training_id%3DYSKPWCN1_4444010920%26_afWindowMode%3D0%26_adf.ctrl-state%3D1brmxokurx_35

“We want the tyranny of ‘You will live in the way I believe’ to end. There should be legal pluralism where the citizen will choose the kind of law they prefer. In our history there has been sects, and they were tried according to and lived in peace. Why would I have to live in another’s mold?” (Speech at the Parliament, 1994).⁸³

Erbakan situated this proposal under freedom of religion. . In another controversial speech, he said the following:

“The RP will come to power. The just order will be founded. What is the issue? Will the transition period be harsh or soft? Will it be bloodless, or, I don’t want to say this, but I’m feeling the obligation to use these words so everyone should see it clearly in the face of their terrorism. Turkey should make a choice, RP will bring the just order that is a must, will the transition be soft or harsh, sweet or bloody, 60 million will decide this.”⁸⁴

The evidence in the case also included a speech that Erbakan supposedly delivered in 1991 during RP’s education seminar in Sivas, which he did not deny making:

“If you don’t serve the RP, none of your religious practices will be accepted, because there is not other way of being a Muslim. There is no salvation otherwise. RP is an army. You will work with all your power for this army to grow. if you don’t, you belong to the potato religion. This party is an army of the Islamic jihad. You cannot act on your own for jihad. You need to be connected to the military headquarters. If you will work, you will work here. Are you a Muslim? You have to be a soldier in this army. There is no being a Muslim without giving money to the jihad. A person’s Muslimhood is measured with the money they give to the Jihad. A Muslim does not give his alms to the poor, but to the jihad army.” We will go to who wants to establish the reign of Kuran. We all have to be

⁸³ Erbakan’s speech at the Parliament session on Constitutional change, March 23, 1994

⁸⁴ Erbakan’s speech at the RP Parliamentary Group meeting, 13 April 1994

in RP, because we make jihad. RP means to work for making the Kuran order preponderate” (Erbakan 1998, 34).

The speeches of other party officials were also of concern. For instance, Sevki Yilmaz urged party followers not only to support the party, but also to support Kuran courses, since in order for daily prayer to be proper, the state had to be Islamic. “God will ask you why didn’t you work for the Islamic state in the *kufur* order. Erbakan and his friends want to bring Islam to this country, under the image of the party. The symbol of Islam in this country is RP. Our duty is to apply the plan as a soldier.” (Erbakan 1998, 34).

Hasan Huseyin Ceylan made another important speech: “This country is ours; the regime is not, my brothers. Turkey will be demolished. I speak out to those of you who are imitators of the wild and imperialist west. Don’t hassle, you will die in the hands of the people from Kirikkale.”⁸⁵

These are some of the speeches that alarmed the secular establishment. The actions of the party also created concern. A symbolic event that drew adverse reactions was Erbakan’s invitation to leaders of religious orders (*tariqa*) to the Prime Minister’s Official Residence for the breaking of a fast (Sabah 1997, January 11). Erbakan’s visit to Libya and Gaddafi’s harsh speech in his tent on Turkish policies regarding the Kurdish issue was another infamous event. This was a diplomatic scandal in which the Prime Minister was insulted at a meeting where he wished to earn the support of a Muslim state

⁸⁵ Based on Ceylan’s speech in Kirikkale, 14 March 1993.

(Cakir 2011). Policies pushing for the establishment of an economic union of the Islamic states, the D8, as an alternative to the G8, was another area of contention with the secular establishment.

These accusations of threatening the regime paved the way to the military intervention. Thus, the rise of the Islamic political party following the successful 1994 local and 1995 national elections and its partnership in the coalition government lasted four years. Multiple actors from the military to the political and economic spheres questioned the risks posed by an increasing powerful Islamic political party to the pillars of the laic Republic. Although it was in office, the Islamic political party felt unease at being neither able nor powerful enough. As a founding member, Hulusi Senturk, stated: “Until one receives a blow, he thinks his fist is made of iron. We realized we were not strong and the state could destroy us overnight. We had to get the support of the society in our back and integrate with the democratic system. We were in power but we were not able.”⁸⁶ This statement reveals the shift in the thinking of the reformists, who were convinced that they would not be able to exercise political power unless they changed course.

The February 28 process that followed the RP-DYP coalition government revealed the paradoxes in the minds of party officials and followers. This process influenced the evolution of the Islamic movement in Turkey by surfacing the division between the two major camps inside the party and allowing disagreements to be vocalized, which led to the party split in 2001.

⁸⁶ Hulusi Senturk, Personal interview, 2010, AKP Headquarters, Istanbul.

February 28 Military Intervention

On February 28, 1997, the NSC held a meeting and presented the coalition government with a list of 18 decisions to be applied. The NSC defined the most important threat to the Turkish Republic as Islamic reactionary politics⁸⁷, and the decisions taken at the meeting were meant to separate religion from public affairs and the political and economic spheres. Compulsory education was increased from five years to eight years, which was intended to inhibit the recruitment of students into religious vocational schools that trained government-employed imams until the age of 14.⁸⁸ All dormitories, educational institutes, Quran courses, and schools that were run by religious orders—and, hence, that were outside the sphere of national education and the state’s control—were targeted. The Higher Education Board (*Yuksekk Ogretim Kurumu*, YOK) was a state institution of the September 12 regime, and it was used to prevent radical Islamists from being admitted to universities. The headscarf ban was to be strictly enforced, and Islamists were not to be welcomed by the state bureaucracy. Publications and columns that propagated for religious conversion would be controlled. The content of Friday sermons were centralized at the discretion of the Directorate of Religious Affairs. Radio stations and TV channels that belonged to the Islamic communities were taken over by the state.

⁸⁷ Briefly described, reactionary politics refers to politics that brings the society backwards. Islamist politics is defined this way, which makes a connotation to the Ottoman past and the non-secular rule.

⁸⁸ These religious vocation schools are called Imam-Hatip Schools (IHL), school for prayer leader and Quran teachers. Many pious Muslims preferred IHLs, thus they were not confined in their sphere of religious vocations. IHLs follow the national education curriculum, and on top of it provide religious education.

In addition to these decisions, a list of firms that were alleged to be a part of the “green capital,” or Islamic businesses, was broadcasted. According to a news report published on June 6, 1997, the Military Chief of Staff sent a secret order to boycott some firms labeled as green capital based on the allegation that they supported religious reactionism. Any business that was related with the Islamic party or a religious order was included on this list (Calislar and Celik 2006, 173).

The intervention did not only entail harsh measures for the coalition government, but also drastic changes in Turkish politics. The intervention subtly indicated that the secular establishment would observe Islamic politics more closely (Cizre and Cinar 2002, 316). Education policies and curricula were rearranged to strengthen secularism. Bureaucrats and prayer leaders would be educated on Kemalism. The military was put in charge of these programs (Cizre and Cinar 2002, 317), making February 28 determinative in the long run as well.

The military continued to brief the media and judiciary on all aspects of Islamist reactionism, including its media outlets, institutions, countries, and capital. According to these announcements, 19 newspapers, 110 magazines, 51 radio channels, and 20 TV channels were included under the label of reactionism (Calislar and Celik 2006, 174-175). This process continued with a ban on the RP, some of its leading figures, and all political activity by Erbakan. Organizations affiliated with the Islamic movement, such as the National Youth Association (*Milli Genclik Vakfi*, MGV), were dissolved. At the time, the MGV, which was based in high schools and universities, had the most members of any civil society organization in Turkey. A raid was organized against all the branches

and representatives of the organization; everything was searched, from books to computers. Since no criminal evidence was found, no one was arrested, yet the MGCV was shut down and all of its assets were confiscated (Interview with Mustafa Sen, 2010).

According to Ali Bayramoglu, the February 28 military intervention had three consequences. The first one was to structure the Turkish Armed Forces based on a tracking mechanism and specialization in the political, social, and economic spheres. The second was to legitimize the legal mechanisms embedding the military forces in the political decision structures, which entailed sustaining a psychological operation with the ultimate aim of creating a homogenous society by using the media to polarize society. The last one was the active conduct of politics, as in the Turkey-Israel cooperation agreement, production of economic and social measures for the Kurdish conflict, management of ministry budgets in the Southeast of Turkey by public order commanders, guiding contacts with the members of TUSIAD (an association of big businesses), media, and the judiciary, applying NSC decisions through governors and bypassing the Ministry of the Interior, and maintaining direct relations with YOK and the university presidents (Bayramoglu 2001, 18).

The scope of the February 28 intervention was expansive. As Hidayet Sefkatli Tuksal, a columnist and Islamic intellectual, mentioned in her speech, February 28 dramatically affected Muslim women. Around five thousand women were laid off or, in the case of teachers, “exiled” to work in remote towns and villages. Tuksal argues that female teachers working at the IHL were sent to Alevi neighborhoods to create tensions

between the two dominant sects of Islam in Turkey (Sunni and Alevi) (TESEV Conference June 24, 2010).

The leader of the Istanbul branch of MGK, Mustafa Sen, described the impact of February 28 on him and the association as if a truck passed over him. Sen was sentenced to prison for six months, which was converted into pecuniary punishment.

Impact of the February 28 Process

Critical junctures are “relatively short periods of time during which there is a substantially heightened probability that agents’ choices will affect the outcome of interest” (Cappocia and Kelemen 2007, 348). While the critical juncture provides agency with room for maneuver to choose a different path, antecedent conditions set the stage for opportunities to arise if the time comes. Socio-economic conditions, political systems, state institutions, and economic conditions can each play a role in defining the framework of the options that arise at the critical juncture. These conditions do not undermine the role of political agency, as the decision-making by key actors plays an important role. However, in the case of the February 28 process, which political actors turned out to be the key actors was contingent upon the antecedent conditions (Cappocia and Kelemen 2007, 347). As Soifer suggests, these pre-existing conditions are “permissive” and can be as important as agency (Soifer 2012, 1593).

The previous sections outlined the antecedent conditions that provided a suitable background for the reformists to act at the critical juncture. Changes in society, demographic shifts due to internal migration, the evolution of the Islamic movement,

economic liberalization, the fragmented party system, and Turkey's democratization path permitted the reformists to act on the opportunity provided by the February 28 process.

The field interviews add a dimension of personal experience with the February 28 process. Importantly, these negative experiences were influential in the mobilization of a party with a larger social base.

A member of the party since 1991 and one of the members of the Board of Directors in the AKP's Istanbul provincial organization, Nureddin Nebati (2010) stated in our interview that the internal disagreements in the party organization were manifest in discussions following the ban of the RP in 1998. Senturk suggested in the interview that February 28 provided the ground in the party for holding internal discussions. According to Senturk, February 28 forced Islamists to recognize the capacity of the state and to realize how powerful the NSC was. Although they did not previously believe in the deep state, they realized that there were small little states under the state orchestrating the conduct of domestic politics.

The FP was founded in the transition period. Yet, according to one of the Deputy Chairman in the Istanbul organization, the FP went no further than being the platform for discussions between the two groups in the party (Senturk 2010).

According to a controversial MP from the FP, the party was "without identity":

"It was under a lot of pressure and it was forced to change. When RP was banned based on laicism, there were worries not to be the continuation of the party. When the party didn't use Islamic symbols, it became hard to reach the population? For that reason, FP was timid. It used a democracy discourse, yet it was as if this didn't fit it. Milli Gorus did not contain much democracy in its discourse, it was implied, yet it was Milli Gorus

was an ideology in itself. From that to go directly in democracy and rights discourse was an issue. People of RP and FP had to think twice before acting, because they faced strong reactions. It could easily be banned as well” (Personal Interview 2011).

Hasan Bulent Kahraman describes the candidacy of Gul in the FP congress as the distancing of his faction (reformists) from political Islam to focus instead on the social, cultural, and economic aspects of Islam. The position of Anatolian capital and their vision for the future laid the groundwork for this change in the party. This group realized that they would not be able to improve their economic interests if they came into conflict with the state or adhered to as strict an ideological position as the Virtue Party (Kahraman 2007, 125).

“The official pressure on the Islamist movement, culminating in the closing down of the Virtue Party in July 2001, has intensified the intra-hegemonic strife within the movement. The proponents of alternative capitalism have now split from the center of the movement, and are forming a center-right religious party that aims to be on good terms with the regime” (Tugal 2009, 106).

Therefore, the late 1990s was a period of repression for the Islamic party and multiple aspects of the Islamic movement. Simultaneously, this created an opportunity for the movement and the party to redefine and deliberate upon their interests, priorities, and values. State repression during this period created an opportunity structure for these different strands to emerge as viable options to reorient Islamic politics. The critical juncture thus created different three alternatives: (1) The process could lead to radicalization of the Islamic political party; (2) The party could remain an ideological

party and preserve the status quo; and (3) the party could adopt a less ideological stance, and become more appealing to the larger population through de-radicalization and adaptation to the system. As the February 28 process suppressed the radical route, the soft-liners in the movement had the opportunity to exert greater influence.

Nebati explained in the interview that, after February 28, the Islamic movement began to question itself and recognize its desire to secularize and benefit from worldly possessions. Nebati stated that this process had surfaced the pre-existing internal disagreements, and suggested, “February 28 is a critical juncture when the pious Muslims and laic sectors started to understand each other” (2010). Similarly, Ussak suggested, “If it is questioned how this transformation occurred, February 28 had a definite impact.”

An AKP party official stated:

“February 28 realized the fracture between the traditionalists and reformists. Social bases for this transformation were the women. They engaged in psychological civilian disobedience. Women initiated the reformist movement. It was an uprising against the system. It was a reaction: we work so hard and there is a coup. This process was a search for freedom, yet while preserving the same values. The objective was to achieve the just order” (Personal interview, 2010).

As Senturk put it, “February 28 pushed us to criticize ourselves, rethink, seeing our deficiencies and taking precautions.”

Yucel Celikbilek, the Mayor of the Beykoz district in Istanbul, suggested that the division within the Islamic party could have transpired even if the February 28 process

did not occur (2010).⁸⁹ Other long-time party officials expressed the same idea, suggesting that the party was already divided internally. Some stated that if the FP congress went differently, the whole party could have been transformed. An AKP official who suggested they did not want to leave the party mentioned they were pushed out of it. Yet, the reformists and the traditionalists reacted to the process differently, as their divergence of opinion was becoming more apparent. Erbakan was criticized for being too soft towards the military, and this created discussions within the party.

For instance, during the February 28 process, Erdogan participated in the group meeting of his party at the Parliament, and made a speech, saying “Either Imam Hatip Schools or the government. We should leave the office if this is proposed” (Cakir and Calmuk 2001, 75). With this speech, Erdogan called for a strong stance within the party against military repression. Cakir also suggests that the Islamic community was unsettled by Erbakan’s passive stance during the February 28 intervention (Cakir and Calmuk 2001, 76). This is a recurrent theme in the interviews. While Erdogan is celebrated as a successful leader, Erbakan is criticized for being too soft and not standing strong against pressure from the military.

On top of criticizing Erbakan for his political stance during the February 28 process, many interviewees characterize him as a daydreamer:

⁸⁹ Celikbilek has been actively involved in politics under the structure of the Islamic party since 1986, and in 1989 he became the chairman of Beykoz at the RP. Celikbilek has been on important duties in the party organization, and he is also among the founding members of the AKP. Stress on change was a major topic during this interview, and Celikbilek stated, “our main principle is that your two days should not match each other” (Personal Interview, 2010, Beykoz Municipality, Istanbul).

“Erbakan formed a very imagined world in his head and he aspired for establishing D8, which the conjuncture did not allow. The Islamic states are hollow; their rulers do not even perform daily prayers. The West would not allow this either. Erbakan had slogans such as we will open Ayasofya and gather our assembly there. He made politics by continuously politicizing a religious feeling and provoking with hollow slogans. The leaders of AKP are much more rational, they understand the world” (Personal interview 2011).

An interviewee who is an academic stated, “Erdogan was the one talking to the people. Therefore his cadres were closer to the reality. Erbakan was away from reality. It was hard at the time for Erbakan to be recognized as a holy leader. If Gul had won in that Congress, who knows what would have happened. It’s very important for a social movement to incorporate the new generation” (Personal interview 2011).

Erdogan, on the other hand, is positively mentioned in almost all of the interviews. As a result of his campaigns in local elections, he had direct relationships with the electorate. White depicts Erdogan as a figure who “replaced the patronage based politics of Erbakan” with a “more participatory, populist grassroots political style.” Thus, he presented a strong alternative to the Islamism movement of Erbakan, from which he had branched out. Economics and media contributed to the changes of meaning (White 2005, 95).

Following the February 28 repression, the beloved leader of the party, Erdogan, was imprisoned. During a rally, he read the following famous poem:

Minarets our bayonets
Domes our helmets
Mosques our barracks
The believers our soldiers

In 1998, he went to trial for reciting this poem, and was sentenced to a year in prison on the charge that he provoked people to hatred and animosity by discriminating based on religion and race (Cakir and Calmuk 2001, 77). This sentence suggested a political ban. Also, it occurred after the ban on the RP as well as the leader of the movement, Erbakan. By that time, Erdogan had already started to change his discourse, using the common denominator in Turkey, Turkish nationalism (Hurriyet, 1998, April 26, Cakir and Calmuk 2001, 78). Erdogan ended up staying in prison for four months, which was mentioned in many interviews as a critical point where the interviewee thought they had to fight for their rights and for their cause. A party slogan in these days was, “this song does not end here,” which encouraged resistance (Cakir and Calmuk 2001, 81).

The morning after Erdogan completed his sentence, he delivered a speech in front of his house, stating that “inside the rationale of a democratic constitutional state, unfair distribution of income should be overcome, social consensus should be reached for development, and Turkey should exhibit its power in foreign policy” (Yeni Safak 1999, 25 July, Cakir and Calmuk 2001, 86-87).

An interviewee, who was in the Istanbul provincial organization at the time and had been active in the Islamic political party for years, emphasized that Erdogan’s imprisonment influenced her support for the party. This was a critical time for the rise of Erdogan as a proper leader for the Islamic political movement. As an Islamic intellectual suggested, “I’m guessing his unfair imprisonment also led him to question. Yet, even while in the Milli Gorus tradition, Erdogan was different from the others” (Personal Interview, 2012).

In order to unpack the dynamics during the dissolution process that occurred from 1997 to 2002, the following section presents the development and perceptions of business actors and Islamic civil society. These actors were crucial in expanding the coalition with the reformists, who could then come to power as a new party.

Impact on Economic and Civil Society Actors and Shifting Alliances

The February 28 process not only had a major impact on the Islamic political party and party officials, it also raised a question for party supporters, particularly Anatolian businessmen and Islamic civil society. While the interests of the Anatolian bourgeoisie were suffering, they realized that becoming closer to the European Union could benefit them.

The impact on the electorate is also twofold. First of all, the transformation of the Turkish society following the big waves of migration, education, and the rise of the Anatolian bourgeoisie, which is convoluted with the global economic system, demanded politics based on their interests. On the other hand, religious orders also had interests in the system and wanted to preserve them. The religious market for dorms and schools were quite competitive, and the harsh rhetoric of Erbakan was hurting their interest since the state was suppressing all religious groups because of the party's discourse and policies.

Islamic civil society

The growing market combined with internal migration and the schooling of children in different cities created a boom for religious orders in economic activities,

opening dormitories and courses for university entrance exams. While this increased their power, the economic stakes became higher. Simultaneously, they criticized their once political ally, Erbakan, for harming their interests.

Since 1997, the Journalists and Writers Foundation, which is connected to the Gulen community, has organized meetings to draw attention to various political issues, opening them up for discussion between different sections of society. As a high-ranking member of the community, Ali Yurtsever stated,

“In 1998, the first meeting of the Abant Platform made it to the headline of the mainstream newspaper *Hurriyet*. The meeting was reflected in the newspaper as coming up with revolutionary decisions. One of these decisions was: There is no type of state that Islam foresees. What the state will be is based on consensus and the mutual agreement of the people. The slogan, Sovereignty belongs to Allah, would lead to the idea that in politics as well God should be the sovereign.”

Party officials attended these meetings. Among the participants were Abdullah Gul and Bulent Arinc, two important leaders of the Islamic movement. Some members of the Gulen community suggested that this interaction could have influenced the reformist cadres to transform their ideas. At the meetings, discussions occurred on topics such as Islam, democracy, and relations between religion and the state. “Some people argue that these meetings were effective on the transformation of the party cadres, and their understanding of laicism and religion-state relations.”

As reflected in an interview, a minister in the AKP government told a member of the Gulen community, “he changed his mind and thinking with the Abant Platform

meetings. He said that he used to believe in the duty of a Muslim to found an Islamic state. Yet there were theologians in the meetings who stated that the duty of the Muslim was not to establish a state in that sense, but to live Islamic values in his own life and to only propose it to the society.”

A prominent member of the Gulen community provides the impact of the process on them as follows:

February 28 was ravaging for us. We couldn't recover intellectually until 2004-2005. Financially as well, people were afraid to be included in the green capital list. Girls' dormitories were raided at night. Gendarmerie raided houses. We burnt the books of Hocaefendi; Risale was banned. There were beatings. We faced a very harsh cruelty. Intellectual movement was obstructed. We couldn't hold house meetings. There were raids if five people gathered. Camps at that time were conducted in the woods, after that they were not held for 10 years. Since it's in the power and control region of the gendarmerie, woods are no longer the option and therefore it is not the same depth of spirituality.

An Islamic intellectual, Ihsan Yilmaz, stated that girls faced physical violence, and that schools were raided. “And then there was the February 28 trauma. The Islamic party realized that there is a strong establishment and the state is very powerful, therefore you do not become powerful and able by coming to office.”

This period provided a space for questioning;

“There has been a change in radical Islamist movements. Political Islamism in Turkey has come to an end; it couldn't become a hope in the region either. In Turkey, it bumped into the wall with February 28. In my

opinion, this was inevitable, because this was a phenomenon against the essence of Islam. The process was very important. Islamists understood over time that any kind of democracy, tolerance, co-existing with others, and living in peace with them was important. They grasped the conditions of the real world.”⁹⁰

This process was “traumatizing and the younger generations understood this was not sustainable.” It negatively affected the followers of the Islamic political movement. Political parties were being banned on a routine manner, and Islamic civil society was also uneasy. The women’s movement inside the Islamic movement is an important and influential part of this civil society.

As a long-term member of the Islamist party asserted, the February 28 process had a major impact on women. The enforced headscarf ban had already created a women’s movement, which formed an activist base of the Islamic political party. Erdogan, as a leading political actor in the formation of the women’s branch in the party, was among the officials who supported the active political participation of women in the party. His targeting by the regime also created unrest within civil society.

“February 28 realized a fracture between the traditionalists and reformists. Women formed the social bases for this. They engaged in psychological civilian disobedience. Women initiated the reformist movement as they formed an uprising against the system. It was a reaction, since we had worked so hard and suddenly there was a coup. Our movement was a search for freedom, yet we wanted to preserve the same values, we still wanted to reach the just order. This is the psyche of the reformists at the

⁹⁰ Member of a religious community, Personal interview, 2011, Istanbul.

time. Just order for us was to become a country in welfare, with little poverty, an ideal society. A society that has long term security.”⁹¹

Although the AKP absorbed women’s civil society after it came to power, reducing their role as political actors, women have been crucial for the Islamic political party from the beginning. The support of activists who opposed the headscarf ban during the time of Erbakan, who worked vigorously even after long debates over whether they should be a part of party politics, their role in gathering enough support for RP to hold office in both local and national government, and their support for Erdogan have played a critical role.

Rising Anatolian Bourgeoisie

The other actors that shifted alliances and strengthened the reformists were the Anatolian businessmen. These economic actors arose out of the changing economic conditions because the constant conflict of the RP and the state was not conducive to their interests.

In order to understand the rise of Anatolian capital, it is necessary to situate it in the history of economic liberalization in Turkey. The beginning of liberalization reforms in Turkey is marked by the decisions of January 24, 1980. During the reign of Turgut Ozal, the first Prime Minister following the 1980 coup d’état, Turkey entered the phase of Export Oriented Industrialization (EOI), which followed the Import Substitution Industrialization (ISI) era.

⁹¹ Personal Interview, Party official 2011, Istanbul

The 1970s are also important for the Islamic political party as they mark its foundation. Erbakan, as the leader of the party, was a staunch supporter of the interests of the then small Anatolian business, and these actors were followers of the party. After 1983, the Turkish economy became dependent on short-term portfolio investment flow as a result of the shift from a state-led development model to a model of market-led growth, liberalization, and privatization. The EOI period did not create a completely free market. Especially in the beginning of the implementation of free market policies, the state favored certain companies, which become very strong during 1970s (Koyuncu and Keyman 2004, 359).

During this period, small- and medium-sized enterprises (SME) started to flourish in this a favorable atmosphere of minimal state control and a changing production structure. The increasing power of the SMEs countered the domination of the metropolitan capital that had been operating in an environment where they controlled most of the resources, such as bank credits and stimuli from the state, which provided tax breaks and free trade zones (Bayramoglu 2001, 35, Koyuncu and Keyman 2004, 361). The capital close to the state was growing at a much faster speed than the Anatolian bourgeoisie. Yet, these actors also wanted to open up to the international markets and conduct their business under similar conditions. During the 1990s, Islamic businesses, which were based on SMEs, thrived. The European Union-Turkey Customs Union agreement of 1995 was a definitive moment for the SMEs that introduced them to the European market. The state did not support SMEs at the time, which felt marginalized to the advantage of large companies (Bugra 1998, 524).

The role of the state has been crucial for the business classes in Turkey. State support of metropolitan capital generated discontent in provincial capital that was exacerbated by globalization and post-Fordist production (Gulalp 2001, 435).

To create a network of solidarity, the Association of Independent Industrialists and Businessmen (MUSIAD) was founded in 1990, mostly by SMEs. The largest business association in Turkey was TUSIAD (Turkish Industrialists and Businessmen Association), and its members were well-established businessmen. MUSIAD was founded with an Islamist framework, and served as an important base for the Welfare Party (Gulalp 2001, 439). MUSIAD members perceived the metropolitan businessmen to be exploiting the domestic market and to be solely interested in profiting from their alliance with the state (Gulalp 2001, 440).

The February 28 intervention directly targeted Islamic businessmen when a list of members of the “green capital” was leaked to the newspapers, which warned Turkish society not to do business with them. According to the 2005 president of MUSIAD, Bolat, they lost 200 billion dollars during this process (Turk 2005).

The founder of the association and an influential figure during this period, Yazar states their alliances changed as follows:

“Erbakan had his own way of working. MUSIAD inspired the Refah community. The party program of AKP is to a large extent the same with the constitution proposal MUSIAD prepared. That generation (referring to the older generation, the traditionalists) likes dependence, organic relations, and obedience. Our generation may be more liberal. When we look on the basis of values, we defend a vision that is formed on a religious basis. I draw my vision based on my religion. Yet if you look at

imagining the global world, free competition, fairness, we defend this. Then this is a synthesis.

1997-2001, MUSIAD was in legal struggle. It's a defendant of idea against the establishment that sank politically with the 2001 economic crisis. Refah could not manage the February 28 process well. We think a different attitude was necessary. So the thought came out that Refah Party with its current structure couldn't resolve Turkey's issues. They defend good values, yet management should not be like this. At that time, there was a serious fragmentation. Erdogan did not approve of Hoca's stance either. We defended a tougher stance, more of a struggle. We were all ready to go into jail for our struggle. The people who thought they would not concede, and that struggle should be fearless split. This split in 1997 was effective in the 2002 restructuring. Abdullah Gul tried to change the RP, yet there was an establishment. MUSIAD formed the economic and ideational basis of the political change AKP brought."⁹²

Both the Islamic civil society and the economic actors gathered behind the reformists and broadened the coalition, leading to the success story of the AKP.

Revisiting the Repression Argument

The February 28 intervention by itself did not lead to the transformation of the Islamic political party, as the repression argument would suggest. While this intervention was the first time the Islamic party faced repression and was banned on the suspicion that it was intending to found an Islamic state, this is the first time such an encompassing intervention was made not only the against the Islamic party but also against the Islamic movement. Imam Hatip schools, religious orders, and Islamic business were all targeted. Also, although the Islamic party had been a coalition party in the 1970s as well, they

⁹² Personal Interview, Erol Yazar, 2011, his office, Istanbul.

actually achieved unprecedented success in the 1990s, during the decade that the military intervention came about.

The state repression that became apparent with the February 28 military intervention had an important impact on the process of transformation. This repression had two impacts: bringing internal discussions to the surface, and teaching the party to change course and not to contend with the state to such an extent.

The repression toward the Islamic party in early 1997 and its consequent banning opened up a platform that allowed discussions among the different wings. The reformist wing grasped this political opportunity and fragmented from the party to found a catch-all political party.

The argument that repression leads to moderation appears too simplistic to explain the Turkish case.

Learning

Pressure from the Anatolian bourgeoisie and civil society empowered the reformists. The repression process taught the party to behave in a more system-conducive way. An interviewee from the Islamic civil society stated,

“I think they have learned from experience. They have learned that being the governing party is not enough; there is a balance of power. They have changed their policies; also, their vision has changed. They know the world better, so both by integrating to the world with the EU process and intercultural dialogue and about the problems with the judiciary and the military, they have pursued rational policies. The radicals have also changed, there are some among SP. Islamic movements today know the importance and benefits of party politics.”

Which leads to the support of AKP, justified as follows:

“AKP is more of a realist. Until AKP, parties such as RP and MSP were a loss for Islam. In a way they abused people’s understanding of Islam. They politicized Islam. AKP has been straightforward that they do not have an agenda to create a Sharia state. The leading figures of the party pray daily, fast, their wives don the headscarf and they have a good family life. They know about the world, they have drawn lessons from what happened with RP, Algeria, Muslim Brotherhood movement; and concluded that if we will do good in the name of Islam, it should be in a secular world. But secularism in the American sense, not freedom from religion, freedom of religion.”

The supporters from the Islamic civil society underline that there was learning in this transformation from RP to AKP: “The biggest success of AKP is their ability to analyze the world, by learning from the past, managing and keeping the balance of power in Turkey, bringing changes gradually. I think they have internalized democracy.”

The fragmentation of the movement during this time of crisis, and the increased internal debates, were visible during the existence of the short-lived Virtue Party. Intellectuals questioned the new directions the party should follow. Islamist intellectuals already had a close connection with the party, and they offered training to the party base and were consulted before important policy decisions.

Kenan Cayir states that the AKP is “the product of the emergence of self-critical voices in Islamic circles in the last two decades.” These new actors “distinguish themselves from the earlier collective interpretations of Islam and open a path for a transformation from an ‘Islamist’ to a ‘Muslim’ subjectivity” (Cayir 2007, 64).

Through the formation of the AKP, White points to the Abant meetings and the moderate, nonconfrontational Islam had developed in society, and the transformation of Islam as a cultural, ethical position under the AKP government (2005, 95).

The AKP situated itself within the sphere of mainstream politics and closer to the center rather than the religious right, stressing democracy and better economic conditions along with the preservation of the laic state. Berna Turam suggests that this decision to aspire to a democratic character, rather than to confront the system, had a major impact in changing the sphere of interaction in Turkish politics (2007, 150, Yavuz 2003).

The February 28 process surfaced internal discussions and underlined the differences of opinion between different factions, altering the balance of power in favor of the reformists. The revisionist policies that the younger generation, the reformists, proposed gained greater legitimacy during this process, while members and followers of the party questioned their usual way of doing politics. Constant conflict with the state suggested that this position did not help the party, but began to hurt the interests of economic actors and civil society in a similar manner.

The existing internal divisions reached a decisive point with the military intervention. The balance of power shifted further with the lack of leadership due to Erbakan's political ban, combined with the rising popularity of the young leader, Erdogan. Reformists who aspired to reach a broader public and become a more powerful party achieved their goal as a coalition formed with political actors who wanted change.

CONCLUSION: PROSPECT AND REALITY

This dissertation argues that the internal power dynamics of the Islamic political party shifted in favor of the reformist faction due to the impact of the February 28 military intervention. This critical juncture empowered Erdogan, who was able to transform and lead the party in the presence of suitable antecedent conditions. As the interests of Islamic economic and civil society actors changed, and the alliances between the electorate and the party shifted, the coalition around the reformists grew larger. Finally, with the traditionalist faction being marginalized and folded into the SP, and the reformists learning to adapt to repression by the military, the catch-all AKP was formed. Field interviews that interrogated the collective memories and experiences of long-term members of the Islamic political party and founding members of the AKP, as well as Islamic economic and civil society actors, lend support to this account of the party transformation process in Turkey.

The transformation occurred as a result of the crystallization of the internal party fragmentation in favor of the reformists and the new leader, Erdogan, by the impact of the February 28 intervention. While the state repression created discontent among the Anatolian businessmen, the process led to the party's learning of how to adapt into the political system to broaden electoral gain.

Internal divisions, which are an important source of party transformation, could be found within the Islamic political party prior to the February 28 military intervention. These divisions were first observed during the 1989 municipal election campaign, and they centered on disagreements around electoral strategies and the inclusion of women in the party apparatus.

This argument is based on different accounts of party members, most of who maintain that their values have not changed. Contrary to the argument that there was an ideological difference between the reformists and the traditionalists, February 28 is conceptualized as an intervening mechanism into the political opportunity structure that emerged following the banning of the RP. At this critical juncture, the younger cadres, who were not necessarily more liberal, but adopted alternative methods of doing politics, created a new party. This was a strategic division, as the main line of division pertained to the type of political practice thought necessary to win office. These divisions boiled down to whether the party would be ideological or populist in its public stance, which encompassed both the daily grassroots organizing work undertaken by the party as well as the political discourse it employed.

In the field interviews with the cadres that usually began their political life in the youth branches of the RP, their biggest commonality is the belief that their values have not changed, that they are same in the inside, and that only their means of achieving their goals is different. Although their ways of doing politics are different, they refer to the preservation of the “moral values of society.” This hints at strategic rather than ideological differences, at least at the beginning of the split. In order to win elections, the

reformists used tactics for reaching a broader electorate that the older cadres did not approve of. These tactics involved visiting places of social gathering other than mosques, such as bars, reaching out to different parts of the population, and cooperating with women.

These changes in strategy, nonetheless, had ideological consequences. In the words of a long time member, “We started to believe in the way that we acted.” The populist strategy that the reformist wing employed during the RP years affected the political discourse that it used to draw newer constituencies into the party. Nevertheless, such a strategic transformation also exposes the limits of the ideological transformation that the party experienced. This is manifested in the gap between discourse and practice under the current AKP government as well as in the tensions embedded in the AKP’s discourse towards others.

February 28 affected the rising Anatolian bourgeoisie, Islamic civil society, and the internal divisions and disputed leadership within the party. At this time, the political cost had risen for the bourgeoisie and religious civil society. February 28 had targeted the party’s ideological wing in particular, encompassing politicians, civil society, and businesses. These social factors interacted with the internal split and leadership vacuum, leading to the formation of AKP. The presence of a possible alternative leader also helped to channel the discontent. By the time the Virtue Party held its decisive congress, this coalition had already been formed. The party program also suggests a softening of tactics, mentioning international law, universal values, pluralism, and democracy. After the ban of the FP, the split was realized, resulting in the formation of a new party.

During the February 28 process, the younger party members had an opportunity to express their preferences, but when they failed to materialize, they opted to leave the party. The political opportunity structure that was opened after the February 28 process deepened the pre-existing divisions amongst the party cadres. As self-interested rational actors, the founders of the AKP seized the opportunity provided by this critical juncture.

The field research also provided insights into questions outside the scope of party transformation. In particular, the radical Islamists who called for a revolution in Turkey to create an Islamic state, which would bring an end to the suppression of practicing Muslims, were incorporated into the party and the political system. This began with the RP and became more intense with AKP. Thus, the party's radicals underwent ideological transformation, as they began to work in the party bureaucracy and integrate into the system.

Relationship with the other- pluralism

In this context, "other" refers to the sectors of society not identified with the Islamist political party. For the Islamist political party in Turkey, others include non-Muslims, heterodox Muslims, non-practicing Muslims, atheists, and secularists (with all the complexities such self-identification entails). However, the other is not restricted to religious categories, but also includes ethnic groups, gender, and sexual identities. For instance, the AKP is primarily a Sunni Muslim, Turkish, male political party.

The party's stance towards secularism is constitutive of its other. Secularism regulates the state's relationship with religion and different religious groups. Thus, secularism, as it pertains to Islamist political parties, involves a relationship with the

“non-religious other.” This relationship can take an exclusionary form, in which the Islamist party can exclude other religious identities by suppressing them or by attempting to assimilate/convert their adherents. It can also take the form of tolerance, in which the other identities are tolerated, albeit in unequal relationship.

As one of the fundamental preoccupations of the Islamist movement has been the treatment of other religious beliefs and practices once they take power, investigating the transformation of the Islamist political party on this question is critical to our understanding of its relationship with liberal democracy. This question also reveals the age-old problematic of democratic theory, namely, the danger of the tyranny of majority and the question of how to protect individual and group rights within a democratic regime. In other words, it is the manifestation of the paradox Chantal Mouffe considers as constitutive of democracy: the unresolvable tension between the rights of the individual and the principle of popular sovereignty.

Interviewees often referred to their attitudes towards minorities as a testament to how democratic they are. During the interviews, some argued that the RP was open to minorities and that its members included non-Muslim minorities in Turkey. However, it Erbakan once stated in a public speech, “If you do not want the Jews to win, you should vote for our party.” Another example is the play Erdogan acted in during his time as President of the Youth Branch—Mas Kom Yah (short for Mason Communist Jewish), on these groups the party ideologically stood against. Also, archival research reveals the former President Abdullah Gül voiced opposition to the re-opening of the Heybeliada Clergy School.

Democratic decision-making

Since the majority of Islamic movements and parties operate in non-democratic political environments, a criterion such as “willingness to compete in elections” is an important indicator in the literature on party transformation. In the case of Turkey, with the exception of the radical Islamists, participation in the electoral system was not a relevant concern. Therefore, it is more important to assess how the party understands democratic decision-making and practices it while in office. This second dimension involves the tension between electoral-majoritarian conceptions of popular sovereignty and deliberative-participatory conceptions of decision-making. These tensions structure the Islamist political party’s relationship with other political parties and civil society, including those belonging to the Islamic movement as well as those outside of it.

One of the major tenets of the party is service to citizens, which is often complemented by the idea that the AKP works for the people. Opposition to the party’s actions is thought of as an obstacle to the party’s service to the people. Interviewees stated that the party is interested in knowing why certain people do not vote for the party, and how it can incorporate them. Although their rhetoric supports the idea that opposition is crucial for a democracy, in practice they treat opposition as an obstacle to be dealt with. Rather than consulting with other parties or supporting political negotiations, the AKP has thus far pursued majoritarian decision-making and favored popular sovereignty. This understanding also minimizes the role of parliamentary discussions, which are considered tedious procedures that prevent the party from working for the people. It is thus important to trace how the notion of “service” has evolved alongside the

transformation of the Islamist political party. The notion of service is important to an understanding of the process of party transformation, as it has been the cornerstone of the reformist faction led by Tayyip Erdoğan since the AKP's foundation, and has since been elevated to the status of a master-signifier in its political discourse.

There is also an important difference between the RP and the AKP on the participation of women in its decision-making. In the RP, women were active in electoral campaigns, but the women's branch (*Hanımlar Kolu*, Ladies Branch) had no place in the party decision-making apparatus. In the AKP, women are more visible and involved in the decision-making, serving as candidates in elections and as ministers. However, while discussing this ideological shift, its limits should also be examined. First, the AKP defines woman primarily as a member of the family, and second, speeches by certain high-ranking members have characterized women as complementary to man, rather than co-equal.

The approach of the younger cadres of the RP towards women has often been described as reformist, as they support the idea that women should work in electoral campaigns. The first female member of the party joined in 1987, and the establishment of a women's branch led to many discussions within the party. The old cadres opposed this development, which led to long debates over its conformity with religious principles. Members who later formed the AKP supported the participation of women as an electoral strategy.

In the transformation from an ideological party to a mass party, the ideology of the Islamic political party inevitably changed. While the party did not become a

democratic one, the speeches and actions of party members suggests that they came to believe in majoritarian democracy. The AKP continuously defines itself as the party of the nation. The AKP uses the Turkish word for nation (*milli*) to describe its supporters in a way that suggests they are Sunni Muslims. The government of Turkey for 14 years has made it clear that this transformation did not lead to a pluralistic democracy.

Beyond the Turkish Case

The analysis of the transformation of the Islamic political party in Turkey demonstrates that the interaction between shifting internal power dynamics, a vacuum in leadership, and changing demands from the business and civil society actors increased the power of the reformists within the Islamic political party and lead to its transformation. This case clarifies the importance of the critical juncture of the February 28 military intervention, altering the balance of power in the party and leading to the formation of a broad coalition.

The case examined here provides important insights for understanding political parties that transform from radical into catch-all parties. Moreover, regardless of the particulars of this case, this study demonstrates that an external shock can disturb the balance of power inside a party and provide an opportunity for reform-oriented leaders and groups to change the party's direction. This juncture would be strengthened by the support of the electoral bases of the party, particularly the bases that the party has integral relationships with. Strong leadership is crucial in directing the shifting balance of power and in taking new political actions. Antecedent conditions provide a basis for the options

the leaders can choose from during a critical juncture. Their choices are contingent upon the support of various actors, both from within the party as well as from their electoral bases. Suitable conditions that allow a leader to seize such an opportunity include shifting balances of power within the party and changing demands of the electorate. At the critical juncture, established social relations can change. The existing cleavages that fit the antecedent conditions benefit from the opportunity that accompanies the critical juncture. External challenges push the parties to change strategies, yet the support from the inner ranks and the electorate are essential. An external crisis may also provide a chance to challenge party loyalty and question existing methods.

Rather than focusing on cases as Islamic or non-Islamic parties, which is an artificial classification, this template is applicable to cases outside of Turkey for further research. Communist and Catholic parties in Europe and Islamic political parties in the Middle East and Africa present potential cases where this theoretical framework can be applied.

For instance, a potential case for the application of this theoretical framework is the transformation of German Catholicism that took place between 1848 and 1914. The Bismarck government and the Liberals perceived the Center Party in Germany as an anti-system force that opposed unity and progress (Altinordu 2013, 391). With the abolishment of the Kulturkampf legislation in the 1880s, the changing political dynamics in the country created a need to establish cooperation between the Center and the Conservatives. The Center preserved its strategic position as an ally of the government. An internal faction within the Center desired to continue cooperating with the

government and also to prevent anti-Catholic positions, which led to a stress on a conservative identity. The internal factions resisted this transformation. The party remained loyal to the government's policies, internal as well as international relations, which also entailed colonialism.

However, problems ensued as a result of colonial expansion, which created major discontent inside the party. Anti-Catholic sentiment also resurfaced, limiting the coalition possibilities for the Center. This, once again, left it outside the political system. To avoid isolating their electorate, Conservatives did not want to cooperate. In order to build a coalition with the Conservatives, the Center had to transform, which led to a declaration of "the non-confessional nature of the Center" in 1909 (Altinordu 2013, 393). In 1911, leading figures in the party underlined conservatism and posited centralization, which led to the continuation of the coalition with the Conservatives until 1914. However, since this transformation was perceived as tactical, constituents did not embrace this change in the party's identity. The outbreak of World War I created a wave of nationalism, and the Center found an opportunity in this new context to merge into national politics, which led to the political incorporation of the Catholics into German polity (Altinordu 2013, 394).

As this case suggests, changing political dynamics, and the demands of the electorate, forced the party to change strategy. However, the internal factions resisted this transformation. This only changed with the external shock of World War I, which created a space for the arguments of the reformist internal faction in the party to adapt to the system and garner the support of the electorate.

Another case is the Italian Communist Party, PCI. As an extension of the Western communist parties adopting the Popular Front strategy following Comintern, PCI advocated for adaptation to the system and integration into Italian national interests (Karakaya and Yildirim 2013, 1330). The Italian left had a hard time surviving in the 1920s, and Communist warfare in Greece had failed in 1949. The party did not want to jeopardize its electoral support. The 1960s initiated a new era of de-radicalization for the European communist parties.

After the 1964 Yalta memorandum and the 1968 invasion of Czechoslovakia, the PCI distanced itself from the Soviet Union. The party operated in the parliament, but did not advocate for a democratic system. Instead, it continued to adhere to its revolutionary ideology. Economic growth was positive, which discouraged the party from opposing the economic system, while it lost its electoral bases. European integration was blooming as an attractive model. The context pushed the party to change its foreign policy, leading to its decision to support NATO integration. In 1972, under the leadership of Berlinguer, the party agreed to support Christian Democrat governments. These changes increased its electoral support. The 1972 compromise created unrest inside the party. “Even though Berlinguer argued that the sacrifices were needed to introduce elements of socialism in Italy, some regarded it as ‘a policy of subordination’” (Karakaya and Yildirim 2013, 1332). The PCI withdrew from the coalition government in 1979. The fall of the Berlin Wall in 1991 led to the formation of a social democrat strategy, and the name of the party was changed to the Democratic Party of the Left (Karakaya and Yildirim 2013, 1332).

This case also suggests that an external shock can create an opportunity to change the internal dynamics of the party, as well as the interaction between internal and external dynamics and electoral support.

Further cases can also be analyzed using these theoretical tools. The impact of a political crisis by disturbing the party's internal dynamics and power structure, and creating room for potential leadership proves crucial in understanding party transformation.

APPENDIX

Nakshibendi Orders

	Iskender Pasa Dergahi*	Erenkoy Cemaati	Ismail Aga Cemaati	Menzil (Adiyamancilar)
Founder	Mehmed Zahid Kotku (after him, Mahmud Esad Cosan)	Ramazanoglu Mahmud Sami	Mahmut Hoca	Mehmet Resit Erol
Aim	-the Islamic education of the masses -involvement in economic, political, cultural issues -strengthening the weakening piety (iman)		-World is solely for praying for God -Teaching fikih -Fundamental reaction to the modern	-redemption of the gamblers, drunken -finding the 'right way'
Publication	-Islam Magazine 1983 -Kadin ve Aile 1985 (Woman and Family)	Altinoluk Magazine		

Political Role	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -National Order Party and National Salvation Party were formed with the encouragement, support and approval of Kotku -He encouraged his disciples to work in bureaucracy -End of 1960s, people from the State Planning Agencies' cadres joined his circle -Some disciples supported ANAP in 1983 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -balance politics and Sufism -individual as the target -not radical changes in the society 	Not wanted for the disciples to get involved in politics	-had good relations with ANAP
Stance toward the State	Wanted to Islamize, but was not against the state Reformist			

Some characteristics	-One of the strongest -Sufist environmentalism -Heavy industry move of NSP, mostly formed during his sohbet -Create a stronger technology than the West, but preserve culture	-Not into positive sciences -accommodated wealthy businessmen -Islam as a religion	-one of the weakest -radical in shaping the society, calls for wearing burka and growing a beard for the men -low income, low levels of education	-whoever visits Menzil to find redemption -no stable network
Secret to success	Could accommodate to the quickly changing conditions			
Activities		Providing scholarship and charity for Muslim kids	Quran courses, big institution in Fatih/Istanbul	

Kadiri Order

Leader	Haydar Bas
Political Stance	-Bas has his own party and runs for elections -nationalist -supports the state
Publication	Icmal Magazine, Ogut Magazine

Nurculuk

Said Nursi promoted religious classes in schools, and positive sciences in madrasah
Serif Mardin suggested that Nur is not an order; it is more of a belief system, since the writings are more important than the leader. The role of the leader became one of the separating factors inside Nurculuk. Gulen community by having a leader, Fethullah Gulen is criticized by the other factions.

Nurcu groups

Islam as a logical set of beliefs based on Quran
Try to teach about the 'Truth' of the religious faith
Support right wing parties
Has the claim to fight against impiety and communism (communism was stressed in the period this book was written)
Read Risale

Cakir argues that the community dogmatized Risale rather than adapting it, to the contrary of Said Nursi's flexible understanding and the capability to assess current conditions

Nurcular

	'New' Yeni Asya and Yeni Nesil	Fethullahcilar*	Zafer and Sur	Dava
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Aim	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -publish materials against impiety and communism -use persuasion to reach people - do not exploit Islam -keep good relations with Christian religious clerics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -enemy is the impious, materialist, and communist --all religions, all capitalists against these enemies are allies -use Western positive sciences to prove existence of God -but preserve Turkish culture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -show the "Truth" through science -Psychology rather than chemistry, and physics -Zafer wants loyal readers not a community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fight against people who misrepresent Nurculuk -most radical view of Nur
Political Stance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -support democracy -have supported DP-AP-DYP -supported military coup -was against the Iranian revolution 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -supported the military coup -obedience to the state -on the headscarf ban, Gulen said the women in burka were either men or indecent women 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Sur argued for Turkey's accession to European Community to Islamize Europe and guarantee Turkish democracy 	

Publication	-Yeni Asya -Yeni Nesil -Publishing was not widespread, so they started to gain respect and become widespread	-Sizinti -Zaman	-Zafer -Sur	
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* Gulen community is a better categorization.

Turkish Politics

1923: Foundation of the Republic of Turkey, rule of Republican People's Party (CHP)

1946: Transition to Multi-party democracy

1950: Election of the Democratic Party (DP), under the leadership of Adnan Menderes (1950-1960 Government)

1960: Military coup, followed by the execution of Menderes in 1961

1961: New constitution

1962-1965: CHP, leader: Inonu

1965-1971: Justice Party Government, leader: Süleyman Demirel

1969: Necmettin Erbakan in the Parliament as independent candidate from Konya

1970: Establishment of National Order Party

1971: Military Intervention (March 12)

1971: MNP banned, 20 May, followed by military provisional government

1972: MSP founded, October (banned after 1980 coup, along with all political parties)

1974: Republican People's Party and National Salvation Party coalition government, leaders: Bulent Ecevit, Necmettin Erbakan

1975-1977: Justice Party, National Salvation Party, Nationalist Movement Party, Republican Trust Party (CGP) coalition government. Leaders: Suleyman Demirel, Necmettin Erbakan, Alparslan Turkes, Turhan Feyzioglu

1976: Erdogan MSP Leader of the Youth Branch in Istanbul

1977-1978: Justice Party, National Salvation Party, Nationalist Movement Party coalition government. Leaders: Suleyman Demirel, Necmettin Erbakan, Alparslan Turkes

1978-1979: CHP, leader: Ecevit

1979-1980: Justice Party, leader: Demirel

1980: Military coup

1980-1983: Military government, all parties banned

1982: New Constitution

1983: Welfare Party founded

1983: Motherland Party Government, under the leadership of Turgut Ozal (Government between 1983-1989)

1984 Municipal Elections: 16 mayor, 2 metropolitan (Van, Urfa)

1984: Erdogan Head of RP Beyoglu District

1985: Head of Istanbul provincial organization and member of the board of directors

1987: Erbakan leader of party

1987: First woman member in RP

1989 Municipal Elections: Maraş, Sivas, Urfa, Van, Konya

1989: Erdogan runs for Metropolitan Mayor in Istanbul

1991: Ozal becomes President

1991-1993: True Path Party, Socialist People's Party, Demirel, Erdal Inonu

1993: Ugur Mumcu assassination (January 24)

1993: April, Ozal died of a heart attack, Demirel became the President

1993: Sivas Massacre (2 July)

1993-1995: True Path Party, Socialist People's Party Ciller, Inonu

1994: Erdogan Metropolitan Mayor of Istanbul

1995-1996: DYP Ciller, CHP, Deniz Baykal

1996: November 3rd, Susurluk Scandal

1996: ANAP, DYP

1996-1997: Democratic Party and Welfare Party Coalition, leaders: Tansu Ciller, Necmettin Erbakan

1997: Military Intervention (February 28)

1997: December, Erdogan reads poem in Siirt, his post as mayor is terminated.

1997-1999: ANAP, DSP, DTP Cindoruk

1998: January, RP banned, Erbakan banned

1998: December, Virtue Party founded

1999: March-July Erdogan in prison

1999-2002: DSP, MHP, ANAP

2000: May FP congress-competition between Gul and Kutan

2001: June: Virtue Party banned

2001: Erbakan's ban end

2001: July Felicity Party founded

2001: August AKP founded

2002-2003: Justice and Development Party Government, under the leadership of Abdullah Gul (%34)

2003-2013: JDP, Tayyip Erdogan (2002, 2007, 2011 elections)

2004 Municipal Elections: %42 12/16 metropolitan mayors

2004: Turkey-Spain joint effort: The Alliance of Civilizations, presented to UN GA

2005: Turkey's EU Accession negotiations start

2007 27 Nisan e-memorandum

2007 Presidential Election: Abdullah Gul

2007 Elections: %47 July

2009 Municipal Elections: %38 (10/16)

2010 High Military Council Crisis

2010 Constitution Referandum: September 12, %58

2011 Elections: %50

2015 Elections: %50

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