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# From de-securitization to re-securitization: the formation and transformation of Turkey's justice and development party

Fatih Ceran

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# THÈSE

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**FROM DE-SECURITIZATION TO RE-SECURITIZATION: *THE  
FORMATION AND TRANSFORMATION OF TURKEY'S JUSTICE  
AND  
DEVELOPMENT PARTY***

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## **List of Abbreviations**

AKP	Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (Justice and Development Party)
ANAP	Anavatan Partisi (Motherland Party)
AP	Adalet Partisi (Justice Party)
AYM	Anayasa Mahkemesi (Constitutional Court)
BDP	Barış ve Demokrasi Partisi (Peace and Democracy Party)
CHP	Cumhuriyet HalkPartisi (Republican People's Party)
CUP	İttihatve Terakki Cemiyeti (Committee of Union and Progress)
DP	Demokrat Parti (Democrat Party)
DSP	Demokratik Sol Parti (Democratic Left Party)
DYP	Doğru Yol Partisi (True Path Party)
EEC	European Economic Community
EU	European Union
FP	Fazilet Partisi (Virtue Party)
FH	Freedom House
GM	Gülen Hareketi (Gülen Movement)
HDP	Halkların Demokratik Partisi (The Peoples' Democratic Party)
HSYK Prosecutors)	Hakimler ve Savcılar Yüksek Kurulu (The Council of Judges and Prosecutors)
İHH	İnsani Yardım Vakfı (Humanitarian Relief Foundation)
KCK	Koma Civakên Kurdistan (The Kurdistan Communities Union)



MGK	Milli Güvenlik Kurulu (National Security Council)
MHP	Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi (Nationalist Action Party)
MİT	Milli İstihbarat Teşkilatı (The National Intelligence Organization)
MNP	Milli Nizam Partisi (National Order Party)
MSP	Milli Selamet Partisi (Salvation National Party)
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NOM	Milli Görüş Hareketi (National Outlook Movement)
OECD	The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PKK	Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê (The Kurdistan Workers' Party)
RP	Refah Partisi (Welfare Party)
SP	Saadet Partisi (Felicity Party)
TAF	Türk Silahlı Kuvvetleri (Turkish Armed Forces)
TBMM	Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi (Grand National Assembly of Turkey)
TIS	Türk İslam Sentezi (Turkish Islamic Syntesis)
TMSF	Tasarruf Mevduatı Sigorta Fonu (Savings Deposit Insurance Fund)
TRT	Türkiye Radyo Televizyon Kurumu (Turkish Radio and Television Corp.)
TÜİK	Türkiye İstatistik Kurumu (Turkish Statistics Institute)
VP	Vatan Partisi (Homeland Party)
YÖK	Yüksek Öğretim Kurulu (High Education Council)

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This thesis is the result of a genuine personal curiosity. The main issue that I tried to cover functioned as a creative disturbance that set me out for a dissertation in the first place. The trajectory of Turkey's political journey in the course of last two decades involved radical internal contradictions at the hands of the same ruling party and I thought I should look for consistency where the mother of all inconsistencies lie: survival in power. Let me tell you this much here; this dissertation has –all the way- been an effort to discern a consistent explanation on the radical transformations of the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) to feed and regulate my own mind.

As it focuses on the rather contradictory changes that the AKP has gone through (and dragged the country with it really) the thesis involves a multi-perspective scrutiny of power use (and abuse), and therefore it neither offers me much utility in terms of employment in Turkey nor it promises the enjoyment of free research atmosphere. In other words, it is a dissertation that robs its author of petite pleasures that any academic desires. Spending the utmost effort to maintain a critical distance, I avoided established pro- or anti-government positions throughout the study. Therefore, it has been an uncomfortable journey; uncomfortable yet exciting.

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## INTRODUCTION

It has been frequently observed by the analysts and scholars of Turkey that the country has followed rather irreconcilable and often times fundamentally conflicting lines of policy and discourse in the first and second decades of 2000s<sup>1</sup>. The last decade of the last millennium was loaded with economic fluctuation and political turmoil, yet, Turkey started to reform in early 2000s under the government of newly founded Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*, henceforth AKP) lead by Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. The substantial reforms that were carried out in the initial years of the AKP rule were acknowledged by individual scholars, monitoring institutions (international NGOs) and European Union who has been following Turkey closely for its membership bid and releasing progress reports on the democratic credentials of the country and its overall compatibility with EU norms and principles<sup>2</sup>. While Freedom House described Turkey's reforms in 2004 as *monumental*<sup>3</sup>, Amnesty International applauded the legal reforms of 2004 and 2005 for bringing Turkish law closer to the international standards<sup>4</sup>.

The major reforms of this period; expanding civic rights and liberties despite sustaining problems in their implementation, curbing the military's (*Turkish Armed Forces*, TAF) influence on civilian politics, loosening the assertive<sup>5</sup> and restrictive implementation of secularism, dismantling the TAF's monopoly on the Kurdish issue and transferring it, be it partly, to the realm of civilian politics, and constructing a reconciliation oriented foreign policy can be conveniently framed in the concept of de-securitization. In the most part of Republican history of Turkey, these issues were regarded as existential matters by the ruling elite "that require emergency measures and justify actions outside the boundaries of normal political procedure"<sup>6</sup>. The de-securitizing policies of the AKP were applauded by Western

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<sup>1</sup>Öniş Ziya, "Turkey's Two Elections: The AKP Comes Back", *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 27, No. 2, 2016, p. 141-154

<sup>2</sup> Progress reports of Turkey since 1998 can be found on the official website of Turkish Foreign Ministry's Directorate of EU Affairs. See, [https://www.ab.gov.tr/regular-progress-reports\\_46224\\_en.html](https://www.ab.gov.tr/regular-progress-reports_46224_en.html)

<sup>3</sup> See, <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2005/turkey>, for the detailed report.

<sup>4</sup> See, <https://www.refworld.org/docid/447ff7bc16.html>, for the detailed report.

<sup>5</sup> Kuru Ahmet T., *Secularism and State Policies toward Religion: The United States, France and Turkey*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2010.

<sup>6</sup> Buzan Bary, Waever Ole, De Wilde Jaap, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*, London, Lynne Rienner, 1998, p. 24.

countries and a variety of voter groups that constituted an easy majority in domestic politics. In the reformist phase of the AKP rule, which continued until 2011 despite serious slackening, Turkey was portrayed as a model country<sup>7</sup> for the Middle East and the larger Muslim world.

After 2011, however, Turkey started indicating signs of backsliding in democratic credentials as the AKP consolidated itself in power and started to implement assertive and selectively authoritarian policies. There is no unanimously agreed upon consensus among the scholars on the temporization of AKP's drift into authoritarian practices, that is, when the policies of the AKP started to change. A periodization was offered by Ziya Öniş, who sees the first term of the AKP government (2002-2007) as a "golden age"<sup>8</sup> with economic progress, democratic reforms and a good performance in foreign policy. The democratic reforms of this period are predominantly correlated with the EU access process alongside other dynamics of power relations in Turkey. In the critical year of 2007, the AKP overcame two crises with secularist establishment of the country, which are examined in detail in the relevant part of this study, and the reforms started slowing down. Öniş defines this period as the "period of transition". The post-2011 period has mostly been in rejection and reversal of the reformist period, in which, deteriorations became specifically visible in rule of law and protection of basic rights and freedoms. In other words, a "security state" started to appear as the AKP started to reverse the reforms that it had conducted.

This thesis examines the underlying reasons and agency of the fundamental changes that the AKP has gone through over the concept of "securitization". The concept is promoted by Copenhagen school<sup>9</sup> providing a new approach that places the choices made in policy-making in the centre stage of security policies rather than presumed facts independent from the interests of policy makers. As Turkey's democracy is less-than-consolidated in an overall evaluation and its institutions are vulnerable to the encroachments of strong leaders, laying the emphasis on the choices and interests of these leaders and how they expand and shrink the political playground offers a suitable approach to study the major changes of the country. In the case of the changes that Turkey has gone through under the leadership of Recep Tayyip

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<sup>7</sup>Taşpınar Ömer, "Turkey: The New Model?", The Brookings Institution, <https://www.brookings.edu/research/turkey-the-new-model/>, Last accessed on February 10, 2019.

<sup>8</sup>Öniş (2016), *ibid*, p.141, 142.

<sup>9</sup> Copenhagen school calls for significant rethinking of established state-centric realist approach in security studies. It focuses on the choices and interests of policy makers and suggests scepticism on taking the security issues as external facts that are given. Most scholars of the Copenhagen School, whose perspective is set by leading figures such as; Barry Buzan, Ole Waever and Jaap De Wilde, worked at Copenhagen Peace Research Institute. For details, look up the article, Copenhagen School, by Scott Nicholas Romaniuk in *The SAGE Encyclopaedia of Surveillance, Security, and Privacy*.

Erdoğan and his AKP, securitization approach would fill a gap in the literature as it acknowledges the changing interests of the ruling elite in a flexible manner and analyzes the policies as such. In other words, the fundamental changes that Erdoğan leadership has taken the country through can be examined without the pitfalls of theoretical inconsistencies. This study follows a sequence of periodization as follows: 2002-2007; period of de-securitization, 2007-2011; consolidation of power and stagnation of de-securitization; 2011-2016, the period of re-securitization and competitive authoritarianism, 2016-2021; intensification of re-securitization and systemic domination. Transformation of the AKP is explained through the opportunities and necessities it faced, and the responses that its leadership provided to survive in power in these periods.

### **Understanding the Transformation of the AKP: *A Herculean Task***

Throughout the two decade leadership of Erdoğan, the conflicting multiplicity of AKP's political positioning, alliances, manoeuvres, policies and discourses have often times astonished its supporters, caught its dissidents unprepared and got the scholars confused making them revisit their initial opinions. It requires a rich box of conceptual tools employed in a multiplicity of approaches that are flexibly structured to explain the formation and transformation of the AKP. In order to carry out this rather Herculean task, one has to be familiar with the peculiarities of Turkish politics and well versed in its historical background since most of the ongoing debates have roots in the modernization era which swept through the whole 19<sup>th</sup> century and continued in the 20<sup>th</sup>.<sup>10</sup> Formation of political power in civilian and bureaucratic terms, development of socio-political actors, political culture, establishment and maintenance of democracy, resilience and configuration of Constitutional institutions and their enforcement capacity on the face of strong leaders that could push the systemic constraints constitute the context of this thesis. This thesis, then, examines how the AKP has changed over the years to survive in power against the backdrop of these factors and dragged the country along on the axis of securitization.

Understanding the two decade AKP rule in Turkey primarily goes through recognizing the role that Islam plays in socio-political life as it has been utilized to attain power and exploited to maintain it by Erdoğan leadership. Islam manifests in socio-political life in various ways, exhibits different formations, i.e., “official” and “non-official”<sup>11</sup> interpretations, and more importantly, plays a peculiar role in the legitimization of the Republican regime

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<sup>10</sup>Mardin Şerif, *Türk Modernleşmesi*, İstanbul, İletişim Yayınları, 2004.

<sup>11</sup>Mardin Şerif, *Din ve İdeoloji*, İstanbul, İletişim Yayınları, 2008.



while simultaneously being downsized by it. As the public and private role of Islam has been an important grounds of political contestation in Turkey and it still shapes the ongoing political debates to a large extent, it is essential to create a comprehensive perspective on how Islam acts as the passive content, guiding principle or source of backwardness for different people that share the same public and political space. Against the backdrop of these rather conflicting socio-political roles that Islam plays, it is also indispensable to comprehend the changing responses of the state as a frequently interfering force into daily life. The responses of the (Republican) state is particularly important for this thesis because they have formed the primary and long lasting grounds of securitization in the public space, as explained in detail in the historical background of the study. On top all that, the idiosyncratic nature<sup>12</sup> of political Islam in Turkey which has historically been formed as an “intra-system opposition”, and its position in the context of *sui generis* secularism<sup>13</sup> of the country as dissidence and legitimacy must be included in the analysis of the transformation of the AKP and Erdoğan, as they departed from the tradition of political Islam, yet, never to return home fully.

This departure constitutes another challenge in the analysis of the AKP and its evergreen transformation. Having abandoned the political Islam in a self-proclaimed manner, Erdoğan has always infused Islamic sentiments into his policy and discourse and re-created the centre-right in a culturally conservative manner. As his political mindset was exclusively shaped in the Islamist tradition, yet he moved onto first centre-right and then nationalism, the in-depth analysis of political Islam, centre-right politics and nationalism(s) in Turkey are necessary to frame Erdoğan’s movement between the three. While the very formation of the AKP represents a paradigm change from the political Islam and its constant repositioning in the centre-right politics<sup>14</sup> has taken place through *retoolings*<sup>15</sup>, a term that brings significant explanatory power into the analysis of the transformation of the Party.

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<sup>12</sup>Türküne Mümtazer, *Siyasi İdeoloji Olarak İslamcılığın Doğuşu*, İstanbul, İletişim Yayınları, 2004.

Türküne defines Turkish political Islam as a pioneering school of thought in Islamic world since İstanbul has been the largest political center where the Sunni Caliph lived, and the Empire, despite all its dysfunctional apparatuses, had well established political institutions.

<sup>13</sup> Despite the fact that state-religion relations in Turkey exhibit idiosyncratic nature in which, the state co-habitates with religion yet simultaneously instrumentalizes and suppresses it in the public space. In its controlled “mode”, the officially accepted Islamic discourse is voiced by Directorate of Religious Affairs (Diyanet) to promote loyalty to state and the identity constructed by it. Although religion is politically utilized by state for long term and by governments for short term gains, the political regime is defined as secular in the Constitution and religious demands do not significantly reflect in the legislation in Turkey. Therefore, despite all its inconsistencies with any major trend of secularism such as French or American tradition, Turkish state-religion relations remain in the category of secularism.

<sup>14</sup>Ceran Fatih, “From paradigm shift to retooling: the foundation and maintenance of the AKP”, *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, Volume 19, No. 1, 2019, p. 175-193.

<sup>15</sup> Kuhn Thomas, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1996.

Another challenge or rather intricacy that specifically appears in the analyses of foreign scholars is the simultaneous existence of transitivity and boundary between pro-Islamic nationalism<sup>16</sup>, conservatism and Islamism<sup>17</sup>. The pro-Islamic nationalism shares a lot with conservatism and yet little with political Islamism, because pro-Islamic nationalism is in harmony with the major political settings of the country including its self-claimed secularism. However, Islamism sees itself victim to Turkey's secularism and exhibits a reluctant consent to the assertive secularism of the country and propagates a revisionary political agenda that would involve Islamic regulations as much as possible. Erdoğan's acumen has primarily manifests through his successful navigations within and between these three worldviews. Infusing Islamist and then nationalist content into his conservative discourse, he redefined Turkish conservatism and used its entire reservoir.

A further difficulty is posed by Erdoğan's leadership style. Disclosing the ever-green pragmatism of Erdoğan and expounding the intricate machinery behind the smooth changes that he has executed in discourse, policy and alliances<sup>18</sup> requires a multi-layered approach. Considering it together with the abovementioned navigations within the conservative reservoir, the alliance formations must be analyzed together with discursive and political changes. His domination first on the AKP and then on the electorate and finally the entire state machinery, and the erosion of the institutions that came with this domination necessitates that the analysis of AKP's transformation must be done through his leadership.

Then there is the issue of Turkey's *sui generis* secularism. When it was founded in 1923, the Turkish Republic had inherited a state mentality that utilizes religion (Islam, more specifically) and renders it subordinate to the political will. As explained in the historical

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<sup>16</sup> (Turkish) Nationalism enjoys a broad spectrum of embrace by a variety of groups in Turkey spanning from social democrats to hardliner racists. The groups that are categorically nationalistic can be framed secular nationalists (largely represented by the Republican People's Party) and pro-Islamic nationalists (largely represented by Nationalist Movement Party). While the secular nationalists are primarily inspired from Atatürk's reforms conducted in the initial decades of the Republican Turkey, the pro-Islamic nationalists try to infuse the content of the "national character" with Islam, largely in line with the ideas of Ziya Gökalp, a theoretician of Turkish nationalism. Infusion with Islam is manifested through their famous motto: "We are Turks as much as Khan Tengri and Muslims as much as Mount Hira".

<sup>17</sup> Islamism involves a comprehensive regulation of socio-political life by the tenets of Islam, which are broad open to interpretation. In other words, the public and political space, according to Islamism, must be designed by the norms and values of Islam. In the Islamist tradition of Turkey (and most others) personal piety and moral integrity are downgraded to secondary status while priority has been given to obtaining and maintaining power. Islamism has never evolved into a political ideology in terms of the level of suggested regulations, yet, acted as a call for mobilization for political change. In Turkey Islamism's distinct political formation started as late as 1970s and Erdoğan leadership originated in this tradition.

<sup>18</sup>Türk Bahadır H., "Populism as a Medium of Mass Mobilization: The Case of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan", *International Area Studies Review*, Volume 21, No.2, 2018, p. 150-168.

background of the thesis, the Turkish practice of secularism could simply be regarded as the management of religious field by the state, or state control over religion and its manifestations. When the AKP came to power, Turkish secularism had been confined in an “aggressive retreat” that it had lost its problem-solving capacity yet was still trying to coerce people in a certain way of life.<sup>19</sup> AKP’ initial co-habitation with secularist settings<sup>20</sup> of the Republic and constant negotiation, and then its ensuing subordination of the secularist powerhouses into an assertively conservative yet still not Islamist agenda constitute a key item on the axis of securitization. Thus, the complexities of Turkish secularism and AKP’s interactions with and through it create an intricacy that cannot be ignored for this study.

In its reformist period (2002-2011), the AKP exhibited empirical outcomes of reconciliation between Islam and secular conception of democracy, expanded the public space for social religiosity and took measures for protection of basic rights and freedoms. Thus, in the height of this period, Turkey was mentioned as a model for the rest of the Islamic world<sup>21</sup>. Yet, at the beginning of the following period (2011 onwards), ineffectiveness of the opposition parties, domination of the Parliament, subordination of judiciary through partisan staffing, domestication of civil society and extensive control over media elevated the AKP into the status of the *only significant playmaker*. Then, the emergent absence of transparency and accountability facilitated the authoritarian drift<sup>22</sup> of the party and placed the Party in a position of constant retooling in a political milieu determined by a fluid discourse and inconsistent yet dominant policies. The fluidity of discourse coupled with an extreme leader cult also brings a challenge for the analysis of the AKP in a consistent theoretical framework.

Consistency has never been sought after by Erdoğan and the party elite in an ideological framework. As personality traits of the leaders have got more determining in

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<sup>19</sup> Groc Gerard, “AKP Türkiye’deki Laikliğin Derdi mi Dostu mu?”, Akgönül Samim (ed.), *Tartışılan Laiklik: Fransa ve Türkiye’de İlkeler ve Algılamalar*, Bilgi University Press, Istanbul, 2011, p. 42.

<sup>20</sup> Turkish Republic was established on a less-than-democratic interpretation of the Enlightenment; therefore, it had a negative perspective on religion. Having a negating control on religion, the basic settings of the Republican rule aimed at removing religious manifestations from the public space and confining it to the private space. Religions -specifically Islam- were regarded as rural and obsolete thus; they constituted the “constituent other” for the self-claimed civilising program of the Republic and eventually they were pushed to periphery. As explained in the part of the thesis on historical background, these masses would later create the major supporter base for the conservative parties and Islamists from where the Erdoğan leadership would emerge.

<sup>21</sup> Çınar Menderes, “Turkey’s Transformation under the AKP Rule”, *The Muslim World*, vol. 96, no.3, 2006, p. 469-486.

<sup>22</sup> Özbudun Ergun, “AKP at the Crossroads: Erdoğan’s Majoritarian Drift”, *South European Society and Politics*, vol.19, No. 2, 2014, p, 155-167.

terms of political behaviour on a global scale<sup>23</sup>, Erdoğan recognized the decline of ideologies and presented a non-ideological and a transitive stance<sup>24</sup>, which has rendered power increasingly centralized and personal, specifically after 2011. Through his persona, Erdoğan has redefined Turkish conservatism and gradually *incorporated* Islamism of the National Outlook tradition from which he emerged, and nationalism of the Nationalist Movement Party to his AKP. The effort of making his persona a *melting pot* for all the conservative-nationalist parties requires extreme flexibility, since all three lines of politics; Islamism, conservatism and nationalism have had certain amount of exclusivity towards each other. The cost of this effort for the AKP turned out to be the loss of internal consistency and extreme dependence on the leader's charisma. As personalization of power was coupled with the less-than-participatory understanding of democracy which does not prioritize accountability opens more space for a populist leadership and this enters in the analysis as an additional element.

This thesis acknowledges these intricacies and challenges and sets out accordingly. The importance of the subject matter, that is, formation and transformation of the political power that ruled the country for two decades makes it all the worthwhile to take on these challenges. Examination of AKP's transformation, as the Party has been long enough in power to change the regime of the country allows important deductions about Turkish society and its political behaviours as well as internal workings of Constitutional state organs. Suitability of the chosen framework, the concept of securitization, as it involves discourse as well as policy making offers compelling explanatory power with internal consistency and encourages the author to take on the challenges mentioned above.

The major source of data for this study is the discourses that the AKP employed throughout its reign on the axis of securitization. Speeches delivered by Erdoğan at the *election rallies, television programs, parliamentary debates* and *press conferences* provide important inputs into the research alongside *election manifestos, party constitution* and *programmes*, most of which are accessible on the internet including the official website of the AKP. As the discourse is not limited to text, the pamphlets, brochures and promotion or speech videos are used as well. As for data on policy making, the archive of Grand Turkish National Assembly (TBMM) is used for access to Parliamentary debates and legislation,

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<sup>23</sup>Fatke Matthias, "Personality Traits and Political Ideology: A First Global Assessment", *Political Psychology*, vol.38, no. 5, 2017, p. 881-899.

<sup>24</sup> For details of AKP self definition as conservative democrat on a basis that defies ideological boundaries, see: <https://www.worldcat.org/title/uluslarararar-muhafazakarlk-ve-demokrasi-sempozyumu-10-11-ocak-2004-istanbul-international-symposium-on-conservatism-and-democracy/oclc/61405541>

while the Official Gazette is utilized to extract public declarations on the legislation. For quantitative data, surveys, reports and rankings of international institutions are used on a variety of issues. The data is not only derived from these primary sources mentioned above, and there has been a burgeoning literature on Turkey at global scale that fall in the scope of this dissertation. Theme-based review of this fast-growing literature contributes to this thesis presenting methodical interpretations embedded in different perspectives, and enriches the thesis through the support and challenge they extend. While the majority of the existing literature on the transformation of the AKP fell in line with the basic providences and hypotheses of the dissertation, the rest was still strong enough to test the hypotheses.

In terms of performance on governance and democratic credentials, while the reports from Freedom House, Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, World Justice Project and are primarily used for overall assessment, theme-specific data from institutions like Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) and Transparency International are used on issues like freedom of expression and accountability rankings which are strongly linked to practices of securitization that is the main axis of inquiry for this thesis. Furthermore, as Turkey has obtained the status of candidate for EU membership in the year 2004, the European Commission has been following the country closely and publishing comprehensive Country Reports on annual basis. The Country Reports have a specific focus on issues that are related to human rights and democratic performance, therefore, contribute with “semi-processed data” to the assessment of securitization practices. The other monitoring and ranking institutions provide insight into the expansion and shrinkage of public space, in general and theme-specific ways alongside providing their comparison with other countries. All in all, the monitoring institutions contribute greatly to the performance of the AKP on the axis of securitization that is, back and forth, with the quantitative data that they provide and the reports and evaluations that they offer. In other words, these institutions equip the analyses with relevant data that can be both primary and secondary.

Despite the presence and accessibility of the rich set of data for the subject matter of this research, an impediment yet remains. It has become near-impossible to conduct interviews and collect objective data in the widespread feeling of insecurity in society created by the draconian measures and mass arrests of the AKP government in the aftermath of the ruthless coup attempt in July 2016, after which this research was launched. Therefore, the interviews that were planned at the initial phase of the thesis could not be conducted while the sentiments about the coup were fresh in the society. It has also been difficult to obtain reliable

numerical official data since the state institution in charge, Turkish Statistical Institute (TÜİK), eroded the credibility of its provisions.<sup>25</sup>Therefore, data provided by non-governmental or international institutions were preferred over the one provided by TÜİK, when needed.

To sum it up, assessment of AKP's transformation is an ambitious work as much as it is necessary to understand today's Turkey. Erdoğan's initial co-habitation of secularist powerhouses (i.e, bureaucracy, media and high-level business organs), constant bargaining and expansion of influence and ensuing domination over them requires separate analyses of his relations with them in a chronological order. On the basis of political language, his departure from political Islam yet infusion of its political elements into centre-right, and lately, incorporation of nationalism into his discourse requires a flexible yet consistent approach. The alliance-turned-enmity relations with the Gülenists, Kurds and the secular bureaucracy necessitate process analyses that involve bringing Erdoğan's interests into the open in each case and extraction of the forces that he set in motion accordingly. The alliance formation has been further complicated by AKP's recent oscillations between Russia and the West<sup>26</sup>at international level.

This study aims to offer a comprehensive analysis of the formation and transformation of Turkey's AKP putting these challenges into account and addressing them in a theoretically consistent framework. The framework has been chosen to bring the conceptual underpinnings of the analysis together in a coherent manner. Still, the author acknowledges the difficulty of consistency and coherence in an analysis that takes a fundamental and holistic change as its subject matter and checks the theoretical relevance and consistency during concrete analyses throughout the thesis.

### **A Brief Overview of Theoretical Framework**

Such a complicated analysis, therefore, requires a flexible theoretical framework that employs a rich set of conceptual tools in consistency. Acknowledging the roles that

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<sup>25</sup>"Turkey's statistics Authority Reveals Conflicting Labor Data Once Again, 2020", available here: <https://www.duvarenglish.com/economy/2020/11/10/turkeys-statistics-authority-reveals-conflicting-labor-data-once-again>, last accessed on 09.01.2021.

<sup>26</sup> Turkey's cleavage with the West deteriorated after 2011 on both principle and interest basis. Erosion in democratic credentials and the rule of law coupled with conflicting interests in Syria during the civil war and worsened the relations between Turkey and the West, especially with the United States, which is more of a significant strategic actor compared to the EU in the Middle East. For more, see: <https://warontherocks.com/2017/12/ankaras-look-east-how-turkeys-warming-ties-with-russia-threaten-its-place-in-the-transatlantic-community/>

individuals and groups play in leadership and recognizing the significance of norms, values and beliefs on the creation of interests of different actors, Constructivism provides the best theoretical framework to study AKP's transformation under Erdoğan leadership. In line with its more flexible conceptual framework than that of Realism and Liberalism, Constructivism doesn't have fixed assumptions and claims on how the political actors behave. Since the AKP is a revisionist political actor<sup>27</sup> in both domestic and international politics<sup>28</sup> and this requires changes in identities and norms of the country the agency gains precedence over structure as the primary unit of analysis. Yet, as it still is a political actor that performs in an established political setting with a significant enforcement capacity<sup>29</sup>, structure maintains its importance.

Therefore, any study on the AKP should involve both the norms and ideas, and the material settings in a coherent whole and this is why Constructivism came to the fore as an overall framework for this dissertation. As the party formed and broke alliances through identity politics<sup>30</sup> to an unprecedented extent in Turkey's domestic politics in line with its changing interests, the transformation that it went through can be properly examined through Constructivism. Leader dominated policies of the party and frequent involvement of emotions in its discourse also make the Constructivism the approach with the best explanatory power.

Aside from all that, Constructivism is the only theoretical framework that could make Securitization, Agonism and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), the main conceptual tools of this study, into a coherent whole and enable multilateral responses between the three. In the

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<sup>27</sup>Atacan Fulya, "Explaining Religious Politics at the Crossroad: AKP-SP", *Turkish Studies* Vol. 6, No. 2, 2005, p. 187-199. Also see; Hale William, Özbudun Ergun, *Islamism Democracy and Liberalism in Turkey*, New York, Routledge, 2010.

<sup>28</sup> AKP's foreign policy has been highly informed and was predominantly shaped by Ahmet Davutoğlu in both theory and practice. On theoretical grounds, Davutoğlu's seminal work on Turkish foreign policy, *Stratejik Derinlik*, (Strategic Deepness) acted as a keystone with its geopolitical emphasis. In *Stratejik Derinlik*, Davutoğlu proposed an outward revisionism that promoted a pro-active policy, rhythmic diplomacy and the rather ambitious concept of 'zero problems with the neighbouring countries'. He also argued that Turkey's geopolitical position and its established historical links with the problematic regions such as; the Middle East, Balkans and the Caucasus bring opportunities that far outweigh the risks that it poses. Therefore he advocated that Turkey should not continue in the post-Cold War era with its historically established non-interventionist policies and seize the opportunities. The practical side of Davutoğlu's contribution to making of AKP's foreign policy has come through the positions that he personally occupied as, the Chief Advisor to Prime Ministers Abdullah Gül and R. Tayyip Erdoğan consecutively (2002-2009), Foreign Minister (2009-2014), and Prime Minister (2014-2016) of Turkey.

Also see for the role of religion in the revisionism of the AKP in foreign policy: Öztürk A. Erdi, Gözaydın İftar, "A Frame for Turkey's Foreign Policy via the Diyanet in the Balkans", *Journal of Muslims in Europe*, vol.7, no. 3.

<sup>29</sup> White David, Herzog Marc, "Examining state capacity in the context of electoral authoritarianism, regime formation and consolidation in Russia and Turkey", *Southeastern European and Black Sea Studies*, vol.16, no. 4, 2016, p. 551-569.

<sup>30</sup>Yılmaz Zafer, "The AKP and the new politics of the social: Fragile citizenship, authoritarian populism and paternalist family policies", *Populism and the Crisis of Democracy: Volume 3, Migration, Gender and Religion*, London, Routledge, 2018.

case of Erdoğan and the AKP, as elaborated in the relevant parts of this study, agonism discloses the underlying mindset through which *the political* is perceived, while securitization represents the practical outcome of this agonistic mindset and CDA provides tools and approaches to study this mindset and its practical manifestation.

Securitization is already a constructivist approach since it performs around the concept of “threat” which is socio-politically constructed<sup>31</sup> rather being a given in the perspective of the Copenhagen School that coined the term. Agonism underlines the necessity of antagonism and hegemony in politics<sup>32</sup>, and centres on seeing the political rivalry through the lens of threat construction, and therefore it is essentially responsive to securitization and consistent with Constructivism. As a tool to study the communication *in and through* the relations of power, the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is indispensable for examining the discourse as the basis, justification and result of the construction of enemies and alliances. Since the AKP has employed discourses that are conducive to antagonistic formations of “us” and “them”<sup>33</sup> in its second decade in government and built policies on social divisions to mobilize its supporters, these discourses constitute a key component of its change and their analysis renders an analytical imperative for this study.

Securitization is chosen as the main framework of evaluation because it explains the AKP's radical transformation at power from disarticulation of bureaucratic tutelage to re-articulation of state power in the form of competitive authoritarianism<sup>34</sup>. In the current deficit of theoretical consistency on the AKP's transformation, securitization offers a conceptual coherence as it extends both ways; expansion and shrinkage of the public space. Since the formative years of Turkish Republic<sup>35</sup> took place in the absence of democracy and the settings of the public space were designed by the ruling elite of the single party regime to build a modern nation in a top down manner, they followed exclusionary methods and securitization was a determinant practice. Even after the transition into democracy in 1950, military-civilian

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<sup>31</sup>Sjösted Roxana, “Talking Threats: The Social Construction of National Security in Russia and the United States”, an unpublished PhD dissertation submitted to Uppsala University.

<sup>32</sup>Mouffe Chantal, *Agonistics: Thinking the World Politically*, New York, Verso, 2013.

<sup>33</sup>Özpek Burak B., Yaşar Nebahat T., “Populism and foreign policy in Turkey under the AKP rule”, *Turkish Studies*, Vol.19, No.2, 2018, p. 198-2016.

<sup>34</sup>Akkoyunlu Karabekir, “Electoral Integrity in Turkey: From Tutelary Democracy to Competitive Authoritarianism”, Başer Bahar, Öztürk Erdi (Eds) *Authoritarian Politics in Turkey: Elections, Resistance and the AKP*, London, I.B. Tauris, 2017, p. 47-63.

<sup>35</sup>Formative years of the Republican history (1923-1938) can fairly be regarded as the period under the rule of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of Turkish Republic. Starting from the beginning, Atatürk followed reforms that aimed at building a modern nation through civilisational transformation that involved not only political but also social change. In other words, while a nation state was aimed to be built out of the remains of an empire, a homogenous modern nation was to be established out of the remains of the imperial society.



bureaucracy has exercised control over issues, such as; visibility of Islam in the public space and demands of Kurds by framing them as existential issues and thus, keeping them outside the realm of political debate.

AKP's initial reformist policies addressed these issues in a non-confrontational way with the mighty and tutelary bureaucracy. In order to establish legitimacy both domestically, that is to say among the broader and non-Islamist centre right, and internationally, with the European Union and the United States of America, AKP had to follow democratic reforms. More importantly, with such legitimation, it would be able to disarticulate the hegemony of the secularist bureaucracy<sup>36</sup> (henceforth, secularist establishment), the real political powerhouse and major securitizing actor in the country. De-securitization was the only way to establish itself as a lasting political entity for AKP, that is to say, it helped the Party consolidate its voter base, a significant portion of whom felt excluded and put into positions of disadvantage by the securitizations of the secularist establishment. It also helped the AKP to expand its playground, in other words, spheres of power and influence as the popularly elected government and build legitimacy as an international actor. After disarticulating the secularist establishment and monopolizing the conservative vote, however, the ruling elite of the AKP came to a persuasion that they had no existential reliance on reforms anymore and started strengthening their grip on power.

The less-than-transparent and unaccountable policies of the Party, then, was met with one large scale public reaction and one systemic intervention in the year 2013. The Gezi protests that came in the summer of 2013 and the Corruption Investigations at the end of the same year turned the exclusionary and polarizing policies of the Party into outright oppression of the opposition groups that were the secular-leftist coalition of Gezi and the Gülen Movement respectively. With 6-7 December events, when the Kurds hit to the streets, the AKP has reversed its own initiative, “The Kurdish Opening” and re-securitized the Kurdish issue. The State of Emergency, which was declared in the aftermath of the coup attempt of July 15, 2016 and maintained for 2 years, materialized an unprecedented level of securitization. Primarily targeting the Gülenists with the accusation that it was them who

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<sup>36</sup> In the top-down and state-centric modernization process of Turkey, the bureaucratic elite was formed on a secularist mindset reflecting the official preferences of the Republic, constituted the national center, and exercised significant power and influence on the society. In the single party era (1923-1950), it has acted as the primary powerhouse in the country, yet, in the multi-party era, (post-1950) it has acted as a balancing force contra conservative center-right parties, still representing the center (core) against conservative periphery.

masterminded and implemented the coup attempt, the AKP has constrained the public space for dissidence.

Absence of will and capacity to reach consensus at the level envisaged by liberal democratic deliberation position the concept of conflict at the centre stage of politics in Turkey. The discourses presented by Erdoğan and the policies made by the AKP further augmented the already conflict-driven political culture of the country. In this regard, the conflict-based approach to politics, Agonism offers a suitable approach to AKP's politics. The agonistic approach opposes consensus-oriented pluralism on normative grounds and stipulates that "contestation takes priority over every other aspect of politics"<sup>37</sup>. Departing from a critique of liberal pluralism this perspective promotes agonistic pluralism<sup>38</sup> which opens space for fundamentally incompatible political positions with a precondition that the actors acknowledge each other's right to exist. Therefore, agonism presents a fitting approach to study Erdoğan's overall leadership style and the authoritarian drift of the AKP that became visible after 2011.

This study embraces the Constructivist suggestion that "when confronted by ostensibly 'material' explanations, always inquire into the discursive conditions which make them work"<sup>39</sup>. Discourse, in this regard, makes securitization and de-securitization possible through harnessing public support and generating legal justification and changing systemic constraints when necessary. Since the political communication is employed for mass persuasion and the AKP has utilized it extremely effectively, specifically in the post-2011 period, the analysis of AKP's political communication is essential to understand its politics of change. CDA is a key tool to shed light on how the Party dominated the political sphere throughout the periods of de-securitization and re-securitization, controlled the narrative on major debates, formed and dissolved alliances, and ultimately, remained in power. In the analysis of AKP's discourse, the study examines how the Party infused the Islamist discourse into that of centre-right, eventually cross-bred it with nationalism. All in all, with a harmonious assembly of the concepts and approaches of *securitization*, *agonism* and *critical discourse analysis* under a constructivist roof, this thesis aims to offer a coherent explanation to AKP's transformation that extended into two decades.

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<sup>37</sup> Connolly E. William, *Identity/Difference: Democratic Negotiations of Political Paradox*, Minnesota, University of Minnesota Press, 2002, p.25.

<sup>38</sup> Mouffe Chantal, *The Return of the Political*, New York, Verso, 1993, p. 4.

<sup>39</sup> Wendt Alexander, *The Social Theory of International Politics*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1999, p. 137.

## **Inquiry and Compass of This Study**

Taking securitization as its organizing concept, this research aims to encircle, probe into and offer an explanation to how the AKP has formed and transformed as a political party through changing its discourses, policies and alliances on the axis of securitization to remain in power. This broad question requires starting with a comprehensive examination of Turkish political culture in its historical trajectory, state-religion relations, that is to say, management of religion by the state through Turkey's idiosyncratic secularism and political implications of this management. In a similar vein, promotion of a civic identity by the state in the process of nation building, the exclusions that have been made from this identity and their current ramifications need to be scrutinized to understand current political debates in Turkey as well as the formation and transformation of the AKP. This scrutiny will help examine the socio-political conditions and opportunity spaces that facilitated the foundation and immediate election victory of the AKP, and its subsequent transformation. More specifically, AKP's revisionism on major political issues, such as; the Kurdish issue, Islam and secularism in the public space and its initial co-habitation and ensuing struggle with bureaucratic tutelage, that is to say, the introduction of these issues into democratic public debate (de-securitization) and the subsequent withdrawal (re-securitization) of them in a selective manner are vital issues to frame the fundamental changes that the Party has gone through. AKP's responses to major crises in Turkey in the second decade of its rule (after 2011) over the practices of *state of exception*<sup>40</sup>, evolution of Erdoğan into a competitive autocrat and the alliances that he formed and broke, are major pillars of the architecture of this study.

In a more elaborate scheme, this study starts with the examination of the underlying factors, that is to say the incentives that it brought for the AKP to de-securitize Turkish politico-legal structure in its initial years. Identification of the opportunity and "necessity spaces" and their dextrous utilization by the Party elite play key roles in this examination. Being inspired by the opportunity space, the concept of necessity space is coined in this study as a multidimensional concept that involves the structures of political necessity, the positions and messages of political agents and the overall political psychology of the public. While the opportunity space is primarily exploited on the basis of improvement, the necessity space is

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<sup>40</sup> Building upon Carl Schmitt's concept of "state of emergency", Giorgio Agamben defines the state of exception as an ambiguous politico-legal zone that defies definition. Being the *legal form of something that can not have a legal form*, state of exception binds humans to law and then abandons the law itself. In Agamben's own terms, state of exception, in practice, involves the "suspension of law" and/or the limitation of it. The concept is elaborated on, in the part of this study that deals with the theoretical framework.

largely exploited on the basis of survival. Necessity space, therefore, is a negative term limiting the discourse and policy options of the parties, yet it may very well be linked to a consequent opportunity space for the parties that utilize it to the best of their interests.

A key point in this inquiry is the extraction of lines of causation and correlation between the policies of de-securitization and subsequent re-securitization, that is to say, obtaining and remaining in power, respectively. Alongside the discourse and policies, alliances and antagonisms of the AKP have also changed on the axis of securitization. The Party first allied with Gülenists to disarticulate the secularist bureaucratic establishment, and then, it allied with the remaining secularist establishment to annihilate the Gülenists once and for all. In a similar vein, the Party that recognized the Kurdish identity to an unprecedented extent in Turkey through the Kurdish Opening that initiated, subsequently halted and reversed the process. Erdoğan, who had previously anathematized nationalism saying “all nationalisms are under my feet”<sup>41</sup>, has become the champion of Turkish nationalism when he did not receive as much votes as he expected from Kurds in 2015 elections.

As the de-securitization period of the AKP was shaped by its struggles with the secularist establishment, the re-securitization period was shaped by crisis management and ensuing authoritarian drift. Through the states of exception and emergency that have been put to practice in the management of these crises, the Party established its dominance and Erdoğan built his personal rule. This study, then, explores into how less-than-democratic policies that curbed basic rights and freedoms were popularly justified with an unprecedented censorship and control over the media. In this regard non-transparent media ownership and business relations in other sectors between media owners and the AKP governments also come to the fore as important points of examination.

In brief, the broad inquiry of this research was broken down to its constituent parts as follows:

- What were the underlying factors for the AKP to de-securitize Turkish politico-legal structure in its initial years in the government? What were the opportunity structures that facilitated de-securitization and how did the Party elite utilized them?
- What domestic and international factors initially fomented a pro-Western foreign policy for the AKP and what others later reversed it?

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<sup>41</sup>See for details of Erdoğan' s explicit denial of Turkish nationalism:  
<https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/erdogan-milliyetcilik-ayak-altinda-22621388>

- How did the AKP employ and utilize Islamic values in its discourse? How did it infuse its post-Islamist discourse with the discourse of centre-right, and cross-breed it with nationalism?
- What interplays can be identified between the shifts of AKP's discourse and its changing alliances? How did it manage to partner with and then fully antagonize the Gülen Movement and maintain its power position? How did it change the antagonistic relations that it had with the secularist bureaucracy into alliance against the Gülenists? How did it de-securitize and the re-securitize the Kurdish issue?
- How did the Party initially co-habitate, yet, eventually disarticulate the tutelary bureaucracy, that is to say, the secularist establishment of Turkey and dominate the political space?

These questions aim at unearthing the underlying relations of power between the AKP and the other actors of Turkish political system including the secularist establishment. Looking into legislation, policy making and discursive management simultaneously, this thesis strives to bring an integrated analysis into its subject matter. Looking into state-religion relations in Turkish politics in cultural and systemic terms, it examines AKP's polity through ruptures and continuities in recent history of Turkey and discloses how Islamic values have been politicized and used to remain in power. Departing from the point that a consistent analysis can only be constructed from the standpoint of power relations, the thesis will evaluate AKP's pro-democracy (de-securitizing) and authoritarian (re-securitizing) polity on the basis of power relations. Without undermining the legal changes, the study will lay the emphasis on how the authoritarian drift on the face of challenges has been popularly justified through a vast media machinery and perception management techniques.

### **Further Elaboration of Research Questions**

AKP has come to power in early 2000s after a decade marked by economic and political instability. Between 1991 and 2002 Turkey has had 8 governments, average term in power being less than a year and a half<sup>42</sup>. Two recent economic crises, in 1994 and 2001, and the military intervention of 1997 had marked the beginning of the new millennium. Turkey was

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<sup>42</sup> For details of Erdoğan's claims on stability, see: <https://www.aksam.com.tr/siyaset/koalisyon-donemi-ak-parti-ile-bitti/haber-418885>

economically and politically unstable and there was a huge demand on stability that required improvements at systemic level. The AKP was founded in 2001 and won its first election in 2002 with a high-level persuasion on the voter under the charismatic leadership of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. Erdoğan had realized that the centre-right parties, Motherland Party (ANAP) and True Path Party (DYP) and centre-left Democratic Left Party (DSP) had turned dysfunctional, the secularist bureaucracy was oppressive. The political Islamist Welfare Party (RP) was given a chance by the voter against the backdrop of the corruption of the centre-right parties in mid 1990s, yet the RP had clashed with the secularist bureaucracy and was eventually shut down. Constituting the power grid of the country in 1990s, this major group of actors was largely responsible for the decade-long instability. Recognizing the opportunity space across the whole conservative spectrum, he established the AKP in the centre-right with a market friendly and pro-Western stance and promised a broad series of reform. Bringing “together pro-Islamic reformists, bankers and financial professionals, and owners of small and medium-sized businesses working in sectors that were relatively independent of the state”<sup>43</sup> Erdoğan created a coalition of power, won the 2002 elections and became the Prime Minister.

In order to establish as a legitimate political actor, which was strongly related to distancing himself from the Islamist politics from where he and the leading cadres of his Party came, Erdoğan positioned himself as a reformist politician. Legitimacy, however, was not his only concern, and he had to secure the support of the centre-right. To this end, he addressed the issues regarding the visibility of Islam and conservative values in the public space and eased the restrictions on religion imposed by the secularist establishment in a tutelary manner. Then, Erdoğan addressed the cultural and linguistic limitations imposed on the Kurds, framed their demands as democratic claims and started implementing reforms that involved legislation, policy and discourse<sup>44</sup>. Thus, he *de-securitized*<sup>45</sup> the public space for two major groups; the conservatives and Kurds who were previously denied full representation and pushed to periphery by the secularist establishment. Developments following the 2011

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<sup>43</sup>Tepe Sultan, “Turkey's AKP: A Model “Muslim-Democratic” Party?”, *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 16, No. 3, 2005, p. 69-82.

<sup>44</sup>Efegil Ertan, “Analysis of the AKP Government’s Policy toward the Kurdish Issue”, *Turkish Studies*, vol. 12, no. 1, 2011, p. 27-40.

<sup>45</sup> The term, securitization was first offered by Ole Waever, who sees the concepts regarding security, such as; threat and fear, through the lens of socio-political construction, and emphasizes the linguistic dimension of it, that is to say, how issues are securitized through speech act and discourse. The concept is scrutinized in detail in the part of the study that constitutes the theoretical framework. For details, see the paper that he presented at a training seminar in 1989 in Sostrup Manor:  
[https://www.academia.edu/2237994/Security\\_the\\_Speech\\_Act\\_-\\_working\\_paper\\_1989](https://www.academia.edu/2237994/Security_the_Speech_Act_-_working_paper_1989).

elections, that is when it became clear that the AKP had established an electoral domination and disarticulated the secularist establishment, indicated that the initial expansion and democratization of public space was primarily done to exploit an existing opportunity space. In the second decade of its rule the AKP would take the democratic reforms neither as a necessity nor an opportunity space and go increasingly authoritarian.

Alongside the changing policy and discourse, the AKP has changed alliances multiple times to survive in power. Paying no homage to the secular nationalism of Turkish Republic, the AKP generously related the demands of Kurdish political mobilization to the deficit of democracy in whose construction, it had no contribution. While the security dimension of the issue, the pro-Kurdish PKK<sup>46</sup> terror, was not underplayed altogether, the issue was brought to the realm of political debate bringing significant support from the Kurdish electorate to the AKP. Describing the AKP as, “We are a government that trampled down every type of nationalism”<sup>47</sup>, Erdoğan became the first politician to identify the Kurdish issue as the “Kurdish issue” in 2005<sup>48</sup>. After this politicizing step Erdoğan went further in his de-securitization and initiated the “Kurdish opening” in 2009 to discuss possible political solutions of the issue. Yet, the Opening fluctuated too much and upon losing the support of the Kurdish electorate in 2015, he publicly denied his initial stance and said, “There is no Kurdish issue. We only have a terror issue”<sup>49</sup>. With this new stance, Erdoğan removed the issue from the field of democratic political debate, where the actors may take different grounds and promote different solutions, and reframed it as a matter of national security. In brief, he re-securitized the Kurdish issue, which had been de-securitized by him in the first place, in line with changing interests.

A similar pattern took place in AKP’s relations with the Gülen Movement (GM) as well. Being a large Islamic movement with urban and educated participants the GM had significant presence in bureaucracy, business world and media. Therefore, it stood as a potential ally for the AKP who lacked its own cadres within bureaucracy and had little capacity in mass media. The two started acting together in the most critical task ahead of Erdoğan: disarticulation of

<sup>46</sup>PKK stands for an armed rebellion named Kurdistan Worker’s Party (*Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê*, in Kurdish) which started political violence in 1984 in Southeastern Turkey. Being regarded as the longest Kurdish rebellion, PKK is recognized as a terrorist organisation by the EU and US and still continues its activities at varying intensity. Details are provided in the relevant part of the thesis.

<sup>47</sup> In the speech that he delivered in 2013 in a predominantly Kurdish Southeastern town of Midyat, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan said, “no one should confront us with Turkishness or Kurdishness... Whoever believes that his ethnicity is superior, he follows the footsteps of Satan”. For details, see:

<http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/erdogan-milliyetcilik-ayak-altinda-22621388>

<sup>48</sup> See for details: [http://www.bbc.co.uk/turkish/news/story/2005/08/050812\\_turkey\\_kurds.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/turkish/news/story/2005/08/050812_turkey_kurds.shtml)

<sup>49</sup> See for details: <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/turkey/erdogan-there-is-no-kurdish-problem-in-turkey/64407>

the secularist establishment. With two major cases; *Ergenekon* and *Balyoz* (Sledgehammer) the AKP-GM alliance targeted the alleged juntas in preparation of military coups in Turkish Armed Forces and removed them from the Army. Then the AKP changed the membership configuration of high judiciary in favour of the executive government and brought Gülenists into important positions. Upon disarticulating the secularist establishment, the two antagonized each other and the AKP declared the GM “the parallel state” in an effort to delegitimize the Gülenist cadres that he used against the secularist bureaucracy. Erdoğan’s alliance with the Gülenists in bureaucracy and media ended and he disowned them claiming that “the same prosecutors who targeted the military with fake evidence were now going after him”<sup>50</sup>. After the 2016 coup attempt, he accused the GM for being a terrorist organisation and attacked to remove them not only from the state but also from the society. Ironically, in order to eliminate the Gülenists altogether, he allied with his old enemy; the secularist establishment, or rather the remains of them.

With changes in these *alliances of convenience*, the discourse that the AKP employed also changed, yet, the party has been successful in managing these changes. The unprecedented control of the AKP over political narrative came with an unparalleled restriction on media. Using terror accusations and tax fines selectively over the media conglomerates as *the stick* and government contracts and privatization of public assets as *the carrot*, the AKP government created a cleardomination in the media sector<sup>51</sup>. The media outlets that were previously confiscated by the state because of financial issues were purchased by a group of pro-AKP business people to speak for the AKP. They were, then, granted privileges through “debt collection, tax authorities, privatization and public procurement”<sup>52</sup>. In many events, these media outlets have used exact same headlines on dailies and subtitles on televisions suggesting that they are centrally controlled. With such a centrally organized and strategically utilized media, and a multidimensional control<sup>53</sup> on social media, which is presumed to be outside the partisan control of the government, the AKP has been able to dominate the political narrative

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<sup>50</sup> For details of Erdoğan’s discursive manoeuvres on these cases, see:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2014/02/27/world/europe/turkish-leader-disowns-trials-that-helped-him-tame-military.html>

<sup>51</sup> A special report by Freedom House: “Democracy in Crisis: Corruption, Media, and Power in Turkey”, published in 2014 is available here:

[https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/2020-02/SR\\_Corruption\\_Media\\_Power\\_Turkey\\_PDF.pdf](https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/2020-02/SR_Corruption_Media_Power_Turkey_PDF.pdf)

<sup>52</sup> Esen Berk, Gümüüşçü Şebnem, “Building a Competitive Authoritarian Regime: State–Business Relations in the AKP’s Turkey”, *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies*, Vol. 20, No. 4, 2017, p. 349-372.

<sup>53</sup> AKP controls social media not only through oppression but also by employing social media workers. See this news article for the details of control mechanisms and hiring of 6000 trolls by the AKP: <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/ruling-akp-hires-thousands-for-new-social-media-campaign-54479>



effectively. As the extensive control on media is an essential element of the consecutive election victories of the AKP, it remains a key component of this study.

As for the discourse of the AKP, even in its reformist period, it has been loaded with conservative cultural elements, which is consistent with its self-definition as conservative democrat<sup>54</sup>. Parting ways with political Islam was AKP's *raison d'être* from the very beginning; yet, its discourse has been heavily *infused with* elements of political Islam. When Erdoğan was accused of exploiting Islam for political purposes by the main opposition leader, he once responded; "I have grown up with the Quran and I live with the Quran" holding a copy of the Quran and positioning it contra opposition<sup>55</sup>. Another example "utilization" of religion came when Turkish currency (Lira) devalued and hit historic low. In August 2018, Erdoğan called for a national campaign to exchange the USD for Turkish lira and said, "If they have their dollars, we have our Allah".<sup>56</sup> Despite unprecedented exploitation of Islam, Erdoğan has never resorted back to Islamism, where he came from. While it is arguable what tenets of Islamism Erdoğan left behind, the pragmatics of elections have always forced him to remain in conservatism. Resorting to Islamism would exclude a prominent part of the conservative constituency and the AKP would lose its capacity of alliance building. Therefore, Erdoğan has rendered the political Islam into a *formless body of content* and moulded it into a "new conservatism" with the facilitation of his leadership charisma.

The AKP government started facing political crises after its reformist period all of which resulted from its democratic deficits. The Gezi protests<sup>57</sup> that erupted in the summer of 2013 can be regarded as a social reaction or rather a social explosion against AKP's polarizing policies. The corruption investigations<sup>58</sup> that came at the end of the same year can be regarded partial disclosing of the patrimonial regime that the AKP evolved into. The 6-7 October

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<sup>54</sup> Yavuz M. Hakan, *Secularism and Muslim Democracy in Turkey*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2009, p.2. Yavuz underlines the practice of using camouflage in Turkish politics. The ethnic or religious parties often use names that suggest otherwise for legitimizing themselves in the eyes of the wider audience and evading closure cases. For secular sceptics and traditional Islamists, the conservative democracy has only been a smokescreen. Yet, in the following years, AKP has remained within the boundaries of conservative politics and not resorted to political Islam, despite increasing conservatism.

<sup>55</sup> See for details of this speech loaded with Islamic elements:

<http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkish-president-attacks-both-chp-hdp-over-religion-81938>

<sup>56</sup> See for details: <https://www.cnbc.com/2018/08/10/lira-hits-all-time-low-as-erdogan-tells-turks-they-have-their-dollar.html>

<sup>57</sup> See the report of Amnesty International on Gezi Protests:

<https://www.amnestyusa.org/files/eur440222013en.pdf>

<sup>58</sup> The investigations are regarded as the largest and most important in modern Turkish history by many observers. See for details: <https://foreignpolicy.com/2015/01/06/why-turkeys-mother-of-all-corruption-scandals-refuses-to-go-away/>

incidents<sup>59</sup> in the predominantly Kurdish south-eastern cities, which ended with a casualty of 50 people, were reactions to the oscillations of the AKP government in the Kurdish issue. The coup attempt<sup>60</sup> that came in the summer of 2016, if the allegations of the AKP are correct, is the result of Gülenist staffing in the Turkish Armed Forces, which has been facilitated by the AKP government in the first place<sup>61</sup>. In brief, the authoritarian turn of the AKP started creating dissidence from different groups of the society and the Party turned more authoritarian to deal with them, that is, in a vicious cycle.

The foregoing policy of Turkey has not been immune to AKP's policy changes. Initially, the AKP has followed a rather ambitious foreign policy which aspired to be autonomous<sup>62</sup> and followed a multilateral pattern under the intellectual and practical leadership of Ahmet Davutoğlu. Despite the AKP government's substantial efforts in reforms the EU's less-than-enthusiastic attitude towards Turkey's membership has created a loss of belief in Turkish public opinion<sup>63</sup>, which then accelerated AKP's search for alternatives in foreign policy. Turkey's open conflict of interest with the United States in Syria, and Western silence on the military coup that ousted Mohammed Mursi in Egypt created suspicion in the eyes of Erdoğan who considered himself ideologically close to Muslim Brotherhood and actually used their symbol of *Rabia* in his election rallies. With the authoritarian turn in his second decade in power, the conception of West for Erdoğan changed from being an external leverage against the secularist bureaucracy to "external powers" who openly criticized the AKP government, performed financial warfare against Turkey and remained silent on the face of possible military interventions. It is imperative to understand that the construction of foreign policy in the AKP era is closely connected to domestic politics and Erdoğan's survival in power. Thus,

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<sup>59</sup><https://www.cnnturk.com/video/turkiye/6-8-ekim-olaylarinda-ne-olmustu>

<sup>60</sup> See for details: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/12/turkey-failed-coup-attempt-161217032345594.html>

<sup>61</sup>Taş Hakkı, "A History of Turkey's AKP-Gülen Conflict", *Mediterranean Politics*, Vol. 23, No. 3, 2018, p. 395-402. There are different evaluations of the relations between the AKP and the Gülen Movement. Some researchers see them as the twins, one active in societal realm (the Gülenists) the other in political (the AKP) who turned against each other because of irreconcilable conflict of interest. This perspective however, seems to undermine the fundamental differences between the two groups, especially in terms of the role of religion in politics and state. See the article for a detailed history of this "marriage of convenience".

<sup>62</sup> Kennedy Ryan, Dickinson Matt, "Turkish Foreign Policy and Public Opinion in the AKP Era", *Foreign Policy Analysis*, Vol. 9, No. 2, 2013, p. 1-18.

<sup>63</sup><https://www.ikv.org.tr/ikv.asp?id=2055>

A survey conducted by The Economic Development Foundation indicates that, as of 2017, when the anti-Western sentiments peaked, specifically after the aborted coup attempt of July 2016 and AKP's identification of the coup with the Western countries, those who support the EU membership is 78,9 % while those who believe in the feasibility of the membership is 31,2 %. The real issue regarding the public opinion, therefore, seems to lie in the possibility of membership rather than the desire for it.

it would be fair to claim that cleavage with the West, especially with the EU was inevitable given less-than-democratic domestic politics of Erdoğan.

### **Hypotheses and Methodology**

This study puts forward and tests the following hypotheses: 1- In the absence of ideological loyalty to the main pillars of Turkish Republic, secularism and nationalism, AKP has de-securitized the public space for conservative Muslims and the Kurds, who had been pushed to periphery by old the Republican elite. This consolidated the voter base of the party and weakened the power and influence of secularist bureaucracy and media elite, which were the only powerhouses that threatened the AKP's power position. It also legitimated the newly founded Party that came from Islamist tradition in the eyes of Western countries, especially those of the EU. 2- Consolidating itself in power, the Party started creating democratic deficits in terms of transparency and accountability, which dragged the AKP government towards the crises of its own making. When tested by these crises, it drifted towards authoritarianism to silence the opposition and survive in power. In terms of power arithmetic, there were no institutional restraints on the way to authoritarianism, as the democratic norms and values were not essentially binding for the AKP leadership. 3- Initially infusing discursive elements of Islamism into conservatism, Erdoğan later added nationalism to his narrative and established a discursive domination alongside the political. With a charismatic persona, a fluid discourse and an effective oppression of the opposition, Erdoğan changed his allies as he needed and survived in power. 4- Foreign policy options, specifically in the relations with the West and the Middle East were chosen to fit the domestic needs of the Party, which also reflected its alliance formations in the domestic power struggle.

In order to test these hypotheses and examine the research questions elaborated above; this thesis is designed to collect data on the transformation of the AKP from primary and secondary sources. The major sources of data to evaluate the practices of securitization were elaborated above, yet it deserves to be reiterated once again here that the most important data source for this thesis is the discourse that has been utilized by the AKP. Conventional print and visual media are regarded as the primary data sources as they have been utilized most effectively by the Party and its electoral base exhibited less access and interest on internet and social media<sup>64</sup>. As the specific issues that are examined in the dissertation pertain, election

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<sup>64</sup>For AKP voter's venues of Access to information, see the detailed report of KONDA: <https://konda.com.tr/tr/rapor/secmen-kumeleri-ak-parti-secmenleri/>

programmes and manifestos, banners, posters, Friday sermons<sup>65</sup>, speeches at election rallies, Parliamentary speeches, press conferences, national days and other venues of mass communication are examined. The data obtained from these sources and relevant literature on Turkish politics and the AKP are evaluated in a constructivist overall framework that involves agonism, securitization and critical discourse analysis as its key functioning conceptual systems.

### **Chapter Overview**

This dissertation is organized in two parts; first having two chapters, the second four. While the First Part explores into the historical background and the socio-political trajectory in which the AKP was born, that is to say the formation of the AKP, the Second Part studies its transformation and proposes a staging on the basis of securitization. The first Part, then, stands a prerequisite to understand the second one as it lays out the basics of socio-political settings and provides an anchorage to understand and examine the change that the Party has gone through.

The First Chapter of the Part 1 constitutes the theoretical framework of this dissertation. Employing the conceptual tools of *agonism*, *securitization theory* and *critical discourse analysis* in a responsive way towards each other, this study aims to explain the political culture of Turkey from an agonistic perspective and embed Erdoğan's leadership in this culture, explores into the regulations in the public and political space from the securitization point of view and examine the transformation of the AKP on the axis of securitization, and analyzes how the Party manufactured a sustainable public consent through effective utilization of discourse. These components are put together in a constructivist framework to build a flexible yet consistent approach on the rather Herculean task of explaining the formation and transformation of the AKP.

The Second Chapter of Part 1 delves into the roots of current debates in Turkish publicspace through the process of modernization and delves into the socio-political conditions that facilitated the establishment of the AKP in their historical trajectory. The top-down modernization of Turkish Republic and its interventionist management of public space that securitized many issues were investigated before the analysis of AKP's establishment.

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<sup>65</sup> For the politicization of Directorate of Religious Affairs (Diyanet) that regulates the official interpretation of Islam in Turkey, and the Friday sermons that are written by it, see: <http://www.turkeyanalyst.org/publications/turkey-analyst-articles/item/463-the-rise-of-diyanet-the-politicization-of-turkey%D5s-directorate-of-religious-affairs.html>, last accessed on June 7, 2019.

AKP's establishment was reviewed over the crises and opportunity structures that were present in Turkish politics at the beginning of 2000s and the responses of its leadership.

The First Chapter of Part 2 starts with probing into the establishment of the AKP into centre-right with a clear paradigmatic rupture from Islamism and through a simultaneous cohabitation and contestation with the secularist establishment. This chapter lays the emphasis on the reform agenda of the Party that was incentivized by the EU's positive responses as well as the voter appreciation. In other words, this chapter deals with the alignment of reform agenda with the AKP's interests and the utilization of the opportunity spaces by the Party.

Second Chapter focuses on AKP's struggle with the secularist establishment through the court cases on TAF and the following Referendum that changed the power configuration of high judiciary. In brief, it unearths how the reform agenda was used to contain, belittle and finally dismantle the establishment in military and judicial bureaucracy in alliance with the GM.

The Third Chapter of Part 2 introduces an account of electoral hegemony of the AKP and delves into ensuing crises that it had with a variety of social and political actors spanning from Gezi protestors to Gülen Movement. The incremental authoritarian turn of the Party was analyzed in the context of the absence of institutional restrictions, that is to say checks and balances, and an effective opposition. The authoritarian turn was periodized in terms of policy, discourse and alliance formation all of which changed in strong correlation with each other.

The Fourth Chapter starts with the coup attempt and explores into further crackdown of Erdoğan leadership on dissidence under the conditions of state of emergency, specifically the Gülen Movement and Kurdish politics. Further centralization and personalization of power through transition into presidential system without a functioning separation of powers is analyzed in this chapter.

The Conclusion brings the analyses, findings and arguments of the dissertation together in a crosscheck with the initial hypotheses, which stipulates that the initial reforms of the AKP, which came about by an extensive de-securitization, did not stem from an intrinsic commitment to democratic values but aimed at consolidating the voter base and obtaining international legitimacy as an external leverage to disarticulate the secular bureaucratic establishment. It also evaluates whether the subsequent authoritarian turn resulted from initial

reluctance on transparency and accountability which then turned into a vicious cycle of authoritarian down spiralling facilitated by the domination of state apparatuses.

## **Part 1**

### **The Rich Legacy of Securitization in Turkish Political Culture and Foundation of the AKP**



## Chapter 1

### **Theoretical Framework: Agonism as Nature of Politics, Securitization as Management of Public/Political Space and Discourse Analysis to Unveil Power Relations**

*“Caesar dominus et supra grammaticam”*

Carl Schmitt

*“All things are subject to interpretation. Whichever interpretation prevails at a given time is a function of power and not truth!”*

Friedrich Nietzsche

#### **1.1. Emphasis on Ideas, Identities and Social Relations: *The Constructivist Approach***

This chapter aims to provide a theoretical framework for the thesis, the backbone of which is constituted by agonism, critical discourse analysis (CDA) and securitization. The relevant concepts, ideas and approaches from these fields are incorporated into this study on constructivist groundwork. These three fields are responsive and complementary to each other; therefore, they have the capacity to work in harmony and consistency. As securitization brings the perspective of threat construction (and deconstruction) on the basis of political interests, CDA investigates the discursive construction of threat in the context of power relations and agonism offers a perspective of politics as perpetual contestation they provide a big and relevant toolbox for the scrutiny of AKP and Erdoğan leadership<sup>66</sup>.

The formation and transformation of the AKP, as a political party that has remained in power for almost two decades as of this thesis is being penned, is an inquiry with a broad scope and penetration, and therefore, necessitates a multi-disciplinary approach. The concepts and perspectives from political science, security studies, political sociology, Islamic studies, history, media studies, public relations, international relations and psychology must be employed in a holistic and harmonious approach. The nature of inquiry requires multiple

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<sup>66</sup>The concept of “Erdoğan leadership” changed in line with AKP’s transformation. Initially, Erdoğan was a competent orchestrator in realization of the importance of teamwork. Yet, in his authoritarian turn, he excluded the senior figures who contributed to the success of the Party and made himself into an exceptional persona as the sole representative of people’s will and the only decision maker in the Party. Therefore, while the AKP as a party comes to the fore in the analyses of the first decade, Erdoğan’s persona becomes the dominant parameter in the analyses of the second decade as he has become the only agent that bore political significance.



levels of analysis which will involve individual, local, national, regional and international viewpoints, the emphasis being on the national. While the voter behaviour is primarily linked to the individual level of analysis, the group mobilization is linked to the local, and political campaigns are linked to the national level of analyses. The foreign policy of the AKP deserves to be seen through two levels of analysis; national and international, as the latter has been performed as an extension of the former. A comprehensive and internally consistent explanation can only be built through including, linking and harmonizing all these levels of approach.

Alexander Wendt, a key scholar of Constructivism, doesn't see the theory a holistic and totally distinct theory in itself. It is rather an open ended and flexible approach that may be applied to any unit and level of analysis. At its core constructivism emphasizes the importance of culture and shared ideas as they construct interests and identities of actors and therefore power. Accordingly, culture should be given precedence over power and interest without denying their importance<sup>67</sup>. Therefore, Constructivism provides a suitable framework to study the transformation of AKP as it has largely maintained power through identity politics, that is to say, constructed its interests over identity related issues. As the Party has been under the undisputed leadership and domination of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan whose preferences, rational or not, shaped the party politics, Constructivism offers a suitable approach to study it as a leader-driven political Party. Furthermore, since Constructivism takes *no phenomenon as natural, given or inevitable*, and rather analyzes them as real-time human constructions, it offers a competent theoretical guideline to frame the AKP with its changing alliances, discourses and policies in line with the choices of the ruling elite.

In its reformist period (2002-2011) the AKP followed relatively cosmopolitan and pluralistic policies<sup>68</sup> and exhibited improvement in acknowledging the ethnic, religious and cultural diversity of the country. Throughout this period, Erdoğan frequently mentioned<sup>69</sup> these differences and acted as a unifying power, at least at the discursive level. In its drift towards authoritarianism, which became more observable after the 2011 general elections, the AKP started following divisive, polarizing and exclusionary policies<sup>70</sup> that primarily targeted

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<sup>67</sup> Wendt Alexander (2003). *ibid.*, p.1.

<sup>68</sup> Çınar Menderes, "Turkey's Transformation Under the AKP Rule", *The Muslim World*, Vol. 96, No. 2, 2006, p. 469-486.

<sup>69</sup> See for a sample speech delivered by Erdoğan: <https://www.posta.com.tr/erdogan-olum-bizim-icin-yeni-bir-baslangic-71904>

<sup>70</sup> Keyman Fuat, "The AK party: Dominant party, New Turkey and polarization", *Insight Turkey*, Volume. 16, No.2, 2014, p. 19-31.

the Gezi Protestors, Gülenists and pro-Kurdish politics respectively. These people were made into “organizing other” by Erdoğan, that is to say, portraying them contra his supporters she made them rally behind him. Especially in its relations with the Gülenists, the AKP has been able to reshape the public perception and radically change the *social facts*<sup>71</sup> about them not only among his supporters but also in the broader society.

In both periods of reformism (*de-securitization*) and authoritarian turn (*re-securitization*), the Party focused on a set of collectively shared ideas and identities and constantly re-defined its interests within and through these ideas and identities. Since the relations between the ideas, identities and interests constitute the major inquiry of Constructivism, it serves as a good overall framework and employs suitable conceptual tools. Differentiating from Realism that focuses on material capabilities, Constructivism postulates that, “the social and political world, including the world of international relations, is not a physical entity or material object that is outside human consciousness. Consequently, the study of international relations must focus on the ideas and beliefs that inform the actors on the international scene as well as the shared understandings between them”<sup>72</sup>.

Underlying the importance of language, Nicholas Onuf, the forerunner of Constructivism, claims that any kind of social relation at any level of analysis can be studied through Constructivism as it “applies to all fields of social inquiry”<sup>73</sup>. In this approach, social relations make people into what they are as individuals and societies, and people make the world into what it is. As nothing socially exists outside the boundaries of the language, it is the medium through which we construct ourselves and the world. Therefore, individuals and society mutually construct each other through the medium of abstract linguistic postulates that are identified as the *rules*. The rules invite and at times coerce people to suit their behaviour to a certain standard or protocol. As the active participants in a society, the *agents* follow their goals through *practices* within the boundaries of rules, the rules and relevant practices create stable yet not fixed patterns that are called *institution*. Therefore, in the Constructivist approach, the goals and identities of the agents and the permissive and prohibitive features of the institutions are not fixed to the extent that they are not subject to change, that is to say, neither of them are unchanging givens. This feature alone makes it the best theoretical

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<sup>71</sup> Wendt Alexander (2003), *ibid*, p. 314.

<sup>72</sup> Sorensen Georg et al., *Introduction to International Relations Theories and Approaches*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2006, p. 162.

<sup>73</sup> Onuf Nicholas, *Making Sense, Making World: Constructivism in Social Theory and International Relations*, New York, Routledge, 2013, p. 3.

approach to scrutinize the AKP, which is a leader-driven political phenomenon that has shown extreme pragmatism and reversed its own initiatives of democratization into first electoral majoritarianism<sup>74</sup> and then competitive authoritarianism.

The relation between the agents and structure, which may be framed as the totality of the institutions and the effects that they create, is also examined by Anthony Giddens. Giddens' *structuration theory* postulates that, as the behaviour of the individuals is empowered and limited by the structures, they also exercise influence on that structures and change them. In other words, the agent and structure are simultaneously the objects and subjects for each other. Rules and resources that are involved in the social action of the agents also constitute the structure. Shared norms and interests lie at the intersection of agent and structure and act as bedrock for continuity as well as change. For Giddens, structures exist as time-space extensions of the practices of human agency and the largest extensions constitute institutions<sup>75</sup>.

Constructivism lays the emphasis on socially constructed character of the actors both in terms of interests and identities. It underlines the possibility of change even in the most established institutions and practices<sup>76</sup>. At the core of the Constructivist approach, lies the interaction between the norms, identities and interests<sup>77</sup>. In this regard it is well-suited to study both de-securitization and re-securitization policies of the AKP. In the de-securitization phase, the AKP challenged well established practices of Turkish Republic on major issues regarding identities; such as, the Kurdish issue, public religiosity and secularism in a revisionist manner. In the re-securitization phase, it vested interests in the status quo that it controlled and represented, and followed identity politics in an orthodox and state-centric manner. In both periods, AKP's envisagement of national identity and shared values contributed largely to determination of discourse and politics. Hence, non-material factors have been decisive in AKP's politics, for which Constructivism offers great explanatory power.

In the examination of AKP's identity politics, social and political construction of the self and the other and the exclusionary politics and polarization that have been created around this construction renders a rather crucial matter. Constructivism, as formulated by Onuf, lays

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<sup>74</sup>Özbudun Ergun (2014), *ibid.*, p. 155-167.

<sup>75</sup> Giddens Anthony, *The Constitution of Society*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 1984, p. 17.

<sup>76</sup>Phillips Andrew B., "Constructivism", Griffiths Martin (Ed) *International Relations Theory for the Twenty-First Century*, Routledge, New York, 2007, p. 60.

<sup>77</sup> Wendt Alexander, "Collective identity formation and the international state." *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 88, No. 2, 1994, p. 384-396.

the emphasis on such a construction through discourse<sup>78</sup>, on which the AKP exercised a huge control. The emphasis being laid on discourse by Onuf also indicates that CDA is an essential part of Constructivist approach and works in harmony with it.

In an overall Constructivist framework, this study is theoretically built on the works of scholars of *agonistic democracy*, *securitization* and *critical discourse analysis*, which are closely interwoven in consistency. These three fields are, by their very nature, responsive to each other: Securitization acknowledges agonism as the nature of democracy rather than liberalism and works without contradiction with it. Since discourse is intensely utilized in the socio-political construction of threats and other policies regarding the public space, it is an integral part of any analysis that centres on securitization. In a similar manner, the agonistic perspective on democracy emphasizes discourse as a major tool to win the competition and undermine the competitor. Therefore, critical discourse analysis is inherent in agonistic approach to political analysis.

### **1.2. Democracy: *Liberal Consensus or Agonistic Struggle?***

On the main wall of Grand Turkish National Assembly writes “The sovereignty lies with the nation, unconditionally!” underlining the source of legitimacy for Republican Turkey, which was established in 1923 on the ruins of a 6-century-long monarchy. Yet, for almost two decades, this sentence stood for Republicanism, as a form of government, rather than an essential reference to democracy, which is popularly framed by former American President Abraham Lincoln in 1863 as a “government of the people, by the people, for the people” at his Gettysburg address. Coming from ancient Greek, democracy is the combination of words; *demos* and *kratos* meaning the “rule of common people”<sup>79</sup>. As the word “common” refers to people with no aristocratic heritage or rank, democracy basically means the rule of ordinary people. Getting into a broad discussion on democracy exceeds the scope of this study, yet in very brief, democracy provides opportunities for, “effective participation, voting equality, enlightened understanding, control over socio-political agenda and inclusion of adults”<sup>80</sup>.

In this dissertation, the discussion on democracy is narrowed down to the debates on its nature, which are largely represented by two approaches that stand out as distinct conceptualizations: *agonism* and *deliberative democracy*. Agonism is a political approach that

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<sup>78</sup>Onuf Nicholas (2013), *ibid*, p. 76-86.

<sup>79</sup>See the etimological details of democracy at: <https://www.etymonline.com/word/democracy>

<sup>80</sup>Dahl Robert, *On Democracy*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1998, p. 38.

acknowledges “conflict” as an inherent element in human relations and legitimizes it as the driving engine of democracy. Chantal Mouffe, a precursor of agonistic democracy argues that “conflict in democratic societies cannot and should not be eradicated since the specificity of modern democracy is precisely the recognition and the legitimation of conflict... what is important is that conflict does not take the form of an ‘antagonism’ (struggle between enemies), but the form of an ‘agonism’ (struggle between adversaries). We could say that the aim of democratic politics is to transform potential antagonism into agonism”<sup>81</sup>. In this approach, *the others* are perceived neither as enemies to be destroyed nor friends with whom it is possible and beneficial to have a consensus on every issue that is subject to political dispute. The presence of disputes and the democratic struggle around them indicate the presence and vitality of democracy: “This confrontation between adversaries is what constitutes the ‘agonistic struggle’ that is the very condition of a vibrant democracy. For the agonistic model the prime task of democratic politics is not to eliminate passions or to relegate them to the private sphere in order to establish a rational consensus...”<sup>82</sup> Rather than restricting the demands in the public space for the purposes of consensus building, agonism focuses on the recognition of the demands and legitimation of the mobilizations built around them within the boundaries of democratic politics.

The intellectual lineage of agonistic perspective on human organization goes back to Friedrich Nietzsche, that is, excluding pre-modern times. He sees domination and exploitation as inherent and essential in human nature and celebrates it. “...People now rave everywhere, even under the guise of science, about coming conditions of society in which ‘the exploiting character’ is to be absent—that sounds to my ears as if they promised to invent a mode of life which should refrain from all organic functions. ‘Exploitation’ does not belong to a depraved, or imperfect and primitive society it belongs to the nature of the living being as a primary organic function”.<sup>83</sup> He alienates the search for consensus altogether from human nature and renders it as *thedenial of politics*. Nietzsche has a firm belief in the impossibility of eradication of violence from human societies: “Almost everything that we call ‘higher culture’ is based upon the spiritualising and intensifying of cruelty—this is my thesis; the ‘wild beast’ has not been slain at all, it lives, it flourishes, it has only been— transfigured... What the Roman enjoys in the arena, the Christian in the ecstasies of the cross, the Spaniard at the sight of the faggot and stake, or of the bull-fight, the present-day Japanese who presses his

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<sup>81</sup>Mouffe Chantal, “Democratic Politics and Conflict: An Agonistic Approach”, *PoliticaComun*, Vol.9, 2016, p. 2.

<sup>82</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>83</sup>Nietzsche Friedrich, *Beyond Good and Evil*, Gateway Edition, Chicago, 1955, p. 202.

way to the tragedy, the workman of the Parisian suburbs who has homesickness for bloody revolutions.”<sup>84</sup>

Lawrence J. Hatab argues that Nietzsche acknowledges the difference between a brutal effort to *annihilate* the competitors and just to *defeat* them. The latter is called *agon* by the ancient Greeks, which refers to competition for domination. Legitimizing Nietzsche’s total disregard for any form of equality, and disqualifying egalitarianism as a necessary component of democracy Hatab claims that, " Nietzsche's ... agonistic dynamism can prepare a vision of democratic life that is more vibrant, inclusive, creative, and life-affirming than that of modern political theories grounded in the subject."<sup>85</sup>Hatab sees agonism inherent in the structure of the modern state. He doesn’t see the powers of state as perpendicular columns that carry the state but as columns that lean towards each other in an effort to dominate one another, and can be balanced by the same agonistic attitude of the others. For him, agonism is entrenched within the government systems. "...Tyranny is avoided not by some project of harmony, but by multiplying the number of power sites in a government and affirming their competition through mutual self assertion and mistrust.”<sup>86</sup>

Michel Foucault sees the main machinery of human organization as relations of power which often times takes the shape of relations of *force*. With force, he primarily means brute and military force. For Foucault the order is set with and through war and the war extends itself into a following political and economic order. “This reversal of Clausewitz's assertion that war is politics continued by other means has a triple significance: in the first place, it implies that the relations of power that function in a society such as ours essentially rest upon a definite relation of forces that is established at a determinate, historically specifiable moment, in war and by war... The role of political power, on this hypothesis, is perpetually to re-inscribe this relation through a form of unspoken warfare; to re-inscribe it in social institutions, in economic inequalities, in language, in the bodies themselves of each and every one of us.”<sup>87</sup>

Foucault’s perspective rhymes with that of Nietzsche, and falls in line with agonism as it was formulated by scholars such as Mouffe. When the established order is turned into a

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<sup>84</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 156.

<sup>85</sup>Hatab J. Lawrence, “Prospects for a Democratic Agon: Why We Can Still Be Nietzscheans”, *Journal of Nietzsche Studies*, no. 24, 2002, pp. 132-147.

<sup>86</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 132-147.

<sup>87</sup> Foucault Michel, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*, New York, Pantheon Books, 1980, p. 90.

sustaining political system, it doesn't neutralize in terms of social diversity and the socio-political contract and the Constitution aims at oppressing the opposition. This, for Foucault, goes along with domination and repression where no concern for legitimacy exists. As such domination is not an exclusive concept for the royal authority, "the manifold forms of domination that can be exercised within society. Not the domination of the King in his central position, therefore, but that of his subjects in their mutual relations."<sup>88</sup> For Foucault, domination is the inherent form of human organization at every level of analysis. As the AKP leadership had previously (when they were Islamist) suffered under the domination of the secularist establishment through high judiciary and military, they acknowledged the suffering carried out to disarticulate the establishment in the reformist period and then set out to establish their own domination in the authoritarian turn. Therefore, domination through agonistic struggle brings a proper approach to investigate the transformation of the AKP.

Another precursor to Mouffe is Carl Schmitt who sees politics as an inherently conflictual game played between the *friend* and *enemy*. "The phenomenon of the political can be understood only in the context of the ever present possibility of the friend-and enemy grouping, regardless of the aspects which this possibility implies for morality, aesthetics, and economics. War as the most extreme political means discloses the possibility which underlies every political idea, namely, the distinction of friend and enemy." While Mouffe and Schmitt agree on the inherent conflictuality of human organization, they fundamentally differ on the inevitability of violence. More importantly, in Mouffe's thought, the antagonism turns into agonism as the enemy turns into adversary and this stands as a brief summary of her thought.

Agonism, as a political theory, extends the field of democratic debate by defining every political institution, procedure, principle, norm and value as matters of political contestation. Preventing any perspective from becoming an unquestionable dogma excludes the possibility of a final closure for any political issue or debate, which would presumably end the discussion forever. In denying closure, agonistic perspective challenges the possibility of a public agreement reached by deliberation of reasonable citizens, that is to say, the liberal consensus. It also hinders formation of hegemony through keeping the authority open to constant contestation. The public will is neither a single entity nor a dogma; therefore, it will always be challenged by other configurations and formulations of its manifestation.

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<sup>88</sup>*ibid.*, p. 96.

On the opposite end of agonistic approach to democracy lies the concept of deliberative democracy which is pioneered by prominent scholars, such as John Rawls and Jürgen Habermas. A key concept for deliberative democracy is the *public sphere*, and “the public sphere can best be described as a network for communicating information and points of view (i.e., opinions expressing affirmative or negative attitudes); the streams of communication are, in the process, filtered and synthesized in such a way that they coalesce into bundles of topically specified public opinions.”<sup>89</sup> As an essential platform on which democracy primarily manifests itself, public sphere, is where the public opinions form through *communicative action*<sup>90</sup>, which promotes rationality in a post-metaphysical way. Exclusive legitimating of rationality in the public debate is fundamentally rejected by agonist scholars on the basis of emphasizing the role of passions and emotions in politics.

Habermas’ emphasis on rationality manifests itself as *reasonableness* in Rawls. In his conception of *overlapping consensus*, Rawls argues that “...the reasonable doctrines endorse the political conception, each from its own point of view. Social unity is based on a consensus on the political conception; and stability is possible when the doctrines making up the consensus are affirmed by society's politically active citizens...”<sup>91</sup> Obviously, in the Rawlsian perspective, pluralism is legitimated through reasonableness. Just like Habermas’ concept of rational deliberation, the perspective of legitimating through reasonableness proposed by Rawls is fundamentally rejected by the scholars of agonistic approach. Thomas Fossen argues that that both scholars position the very democratic procedures beyond democratic dispute: “So, if one adopts an agonistic conception of the political as contestation, it is clear that Rawls and Habermas attempt to depoliticize — to place beyond contestation — public institutions and practices, a set of basic democratic procedures, at least with regard to the principles according to which they are judged”<sup>92</sup>

Karl R. Popper also proposes a rather simplified choice of binary opposites regarding rationalism in public decision making: “...this irrational emphasis upon emotion and passion leads ultimately to what I can only describe as crime. One reason for this opinion is that this attitude, which is at best one of resignation towards the irrational nature of human beings, at worst one of scorn for human reason, must lead to an appeal to violence and brutal force as

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<sup>89</sup> Habermas Jürgen, *Between Facts and Norms: Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy*, Cambridge, MIT Press, 1996, p. 360.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, p. XIII.

<sup>91</sup> Rawls John, *Political Liberalism*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1993, p. 134.

<sup>92</sup> Fossen Thomas, “Agonistic Critiques of Liberalism: Perfection and Emancipation”, *Contemporary Political Theory*, Vol.7, No.4, 2008, p. 376–394.



the ultimate arbiter in any dispute.”<sup>93</sup> According to Popper even more constructive feelings such as love and reverence render useless, therefore he warns about the possible harm that the less constructive feelings would bring to the processes of public deliberation.

In his effort to disqualify the emotions from decision-making processes, Popper acknowledges the exclusivist nature of rationalism. Furthermore, he doesn't disclose why and how human emotions render useless to get over disputes. He also seems to detach the effect of the emotion from its nature, that is to say, regardless of whether the emotion is positive or not, its contribution to decision making processes cannot be positive, he claims. Reminiscent of Thomas Hobbes, Popper seems to believe that humans are violent by nature, and therefore, regards the reason as transcendence of this nature. In his perspective, there lies a strong belief that reasoning could practically be detached from emotions and passions, which for him, brings flaws to human reasoning.

A prominent forerunner in liberal thought, John Stuart Mill, limits the liberty to those who can perform public deliberation: “Liberty, as a principle, has no application to any state of things anterior to the time when mankind have become capable of being improved by free and equal discussion.”<sup>94</sup> For Mill, before attaining the capacity of free and equal discussion that is to say when humans are not civilized, despotism is a legitimate form of government. In brief, for Mills, liberty is –by means of practice- exclusive to those who can organize free and fair deliberation for the purposes of decision making.

As the free and fair public deliberation is institutionalized at systemic level the citizens are expected to come to agreement through procedures that reflect ideal conditions of rational deliberation as closely as possible. All the modes of participation, for example voting, should involve rational and well-considered interaction rather than being the resulting effect of the political identity and personal aspirations. Therefore, the preconditions of deliberative democracy are quite demanding: The participants of deliberation must secure a certain degree of equality, multilateral openness and have access to specifics of the debated issues and capacity to process them in rational terms to the best of their interests. This *ideal* of deliberative democracy predicates on making the collective decisions through free and uncoerced thinking and argumentation of equal citizens. The arguments must aim at reaching a common good. Therefore, it is flawed in two points: First, it brings a normative burden of aiming at common good and presupposes that the groups and individuals that participate in

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<sup>93</sup> Popper R. Karl, *The Open Society and Its Enemies*, New York, Routledge, 2011, p. 439.

<sup>94</sup> Mill, J. Stuart, *On Liberty*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2003, p. 81.

the deliberations would position themselves as such. Second, the decisions are legitimate as long as they have the consent of those who are affected by them. Furthermore, it also presumes that all the participants are relatively equally able to engage, propose reasons and critique reject and accept the arguments put forward by others. In the Turkish case neither the public space has been open to such engagements nor have the people exhibited the preconditions of public deliberation. For example, a survey conducted on the eve of the crucial Constitutional referendum of 2010, 54% of the opponents of the proposed change did not know the content of change while 61% of the proponents declared to have enough information<sup>95</sup>. Almost half of the voters from both sides did not have either the will or the capacity to engage in the details of the debate. Yet they voted in the absence of rational and well-considered interaction, a core prerequisite of deliberative democracy.

Abstract or presumed performance aside, politics stems from the conditions of real life and exercises influence on it. Granted that the participants as the very people who live in the world of continuous inequalities, they will have very different levels of will and capacity in terms of access to information and ability to process it in rational or self-serving terms. Furthermore, most political systems are built upon exclusions of some people who are affected by their political decisions. The issue gets more critical in the case of disadvantaged groups; such as women, children, immigrants, ethnic or religious minorities and those who are politically marginal and underrepresented. Although liberal thinkers recognize these predicaments and underline that conditions like equality, openness, reciprocity and capacity are regulations rather than being the preconditions of deliberation, the absence of these conditions still renders the process of deliberation inoperable in its presumed form, especially in country like Turkey where the conditions of deliberation are absent to a significant extent.

### **1.3. Agonistic Critique of Liberal Consensus**

The fundamental divide between agonism and deliberative democracy in terms of the feasibility of consensus in the conditions of the real world that is marked by social inequalities and political divisions around them and deep disagreements on morality and ontology justify treating the two approaches as separate categories. Agonism extends three major critiques towards deliberative democracy, which are closely interlocked: a) the presumptive and

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<sup>95</sup>See for details: <https://www.internethaber.com/orc-referandum-anket-sonuclari-fark-acildi-foto-galerisi-1760320.htm>

excessive emphasis of rational deliberation, b) exclusionary nature of consensus as the core proposal of deliberative democracy, c) depoliticizing effect of a and b.

The defining element in liberal consensus and therefore the deliberative democracy is the presumption of rational behaviour of the individuals in decision making processes, which also presumes that emotions could be excluded from reasoning. Recent studies call for revision of this perspective that regards rationality in isolation from emotions. New findings in cognitive science underline the interrelatedness and interdependence between the two: “Emotion is intertwined with cognition in a way that requires the processes to be analyzed interdependently; emotion is, inescapably, an essential component of rationality.”<sup>96</sup> It is extremely difficult to nullify the emotions at any decision moment and it could only be done as an exception. The recent surveys in Turkey indicate that almost 90% of the electorate doesn’t vote on rational processes<sup>97</sup>. Consciously or sub-consciously past experiences shape the positioning and behaviour of the voter and shape their values, perceptions and fears. Therefore, emotions shape the overall voting behaviour far ahead of rational deliberation, rendering deliberative democracy irrelevant for the Turkish case.

Basic human feelings of love, hate, enthusiasm, fear etc. are inevitable parts of decision making processes since human life is a countless array of decision making processes and the emotions cannot be fully eradicated from the agent of decision. The very process of formation of interest and desire and the calculation of costs and benefits, and the relevant choices are all influenced by emotions. Such a presumptive eradication of emotions from the decision making –even if possible- would hinder the process and take away our capacity to perform basic functions. Reason and emotion are integral to human nature and the emotions spanning from fear to enthusiasm interact with the concrete interests of the subject and create political identity and behaviour.

For the agonistic approach, public space cannot be solely a space of cold blooded deliberation since such a deliberation involves a limited part of human nature. At individual and societal levels emotions work by the side of and through the rational deliberation. According to Geroge E. Marcus, the capacity of reasoning is called to into action by the emotions and without the emotions the reason would have no directionality or purposeful use: “...unemotional reason, even with a full and accurate understanding of the situation, will not

<sup>96</sup> McDermott Rose, “The Feeling of Rationality: The Meaning of Neuroscientific Advances for Political Science”, *Perspectives on Politics*, vol. 2, no. 4, 2004, p. 691-706.

<sup>97</sup>See the article of Bekir Ağırdir, the manager of KONDA research company at: <https://t24.com.tr/yazarlar/bekir-agirdir/secmen-nasil-dusunur-nasil-karar-verir,354>

act... With the cooperative engagement of emotion, the abilities that reason brings— introspection, critical and explicit consideration, weighing of the benefits and costs of alternative courses of action, and application of general principles such as impartiality, equality, and reciprocity—can be engaged to help determine the proper course of action. Without the engagement of emotion, reason is likely to be left adrift and uncalled.”<sup>98</sup>

Furthermore, the desirable socio-political conditions for such a public deliberation, the ideal speech situation<sup>99</sup> as Jürgen Habermas coins it, includes equality of opportunity and competence of understanding and expression, reciprocity, proposing arguments and receiving them in unconstrained freedom. Obviously, these are normative aspirations rather than realistic conditions that are easily attainable. In the real world of established inequalities and exclusions of different sorts, and beyond them, the moral imperative of the debating parties on aiming at some kind of agreement render rather utopian.

The attitude of individual on any issue is closely related to the past experiences. When faced with an issue about which there is a positive past experience, the individual approaches it with joy and enthusiasm and tend to engage positively. On the other hand, when the issue is intuitively, sub-consciously or consciously tied to a negative past experience, the individual approaches with negative feelings such as anxiety or anger, and tends to engage negatively. Thus, the emotions emanating from past experiences determine the initial position that individuals take on any issue. In the case of recent Turkish politics, the AKP has frequently used the past agonies created by the main opposition CHP. Using religious sensitivities in politics effectively, Erdoğan has countless times claimed that during the single party rule the CHP has sold the mosques and at times converted them into barns. He also reminded that during the single party period, teaching the holy scripture of Muslims, the Koran was prohibited and people had to do them in caves.<sup>100</sup> Past agonies were effectively reminded by Erdoğan in an augmentative way to consolidate his own electorate against the CHP and keep the religiously sensitive voter away from it. He successfully exploited the socio-political vulnerabilities and the emotions that are embedded in the heritage of the country and turning

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<sup>98</sup> Marcus George E., *The Sentimental Citizen: Emotion in Democratic Politics*, Pennsylvania, Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002, p. 141.

<sup>99</sup> Habermas Jürgen, *On Pragmatics of Social Interaction*, Massachusetts, MIT Press, 2001, p. 97.

<sup>100</sup> <https://www.haberler.com/erdogan-tek-parti-doneminde-ahira-donusturulen-3564775-haberi/> In this parliamentary speech Erdoğan gave 10 examples for such cases about mosques and claimed that there was a totalitarian oppression on religious manifestations during the single-party period when the current main opposition CHP was exercising unchecked power.

the elections into *larger-than-political* choices Erdoğan rendered the rational choice voting<sup>101</sup> a less-than-determinant behaviour.

The second major critique of the agonistic approach on the deliberative democracy addresses the excessive emphasis of the latter on consensus. From the perspective of agonism, the liberal consensus is restrictive in terms of the content of political contestation, and exclusionary in terms of participation of actors. Therefore, it is normatively negated and regarded as dangerous in practical terms. Robert Glover sees the emphasis on rational consensus as a form of reductionism: "...societies ought to answer questions of democratic legitimacy not simply via rationalist appeal to the proper procedures or institutions, but in the affective orientations from which such structures flow. In a break with the dominant tradition, these works are constructing the ideal affective-cognitive dispositions of democratic citizenship in contemporary political life."<sup>102</sup> Beyond the normative-theoretical debates, the separation of rational function and emotions is a practical impossibility for Glover: "Reason and emotion are inseparably linked, as core intellectual processes always exhibit a mixture of rational and affective elements... Emotion creeps into accounts of allegedly pure, rational human functioning in numerous ways: formulation of interests in Rawls (rooted in desire), our ability to consider the perspectives of others in the Rawlsian original position..."<sup>103</sup>

Victory, retaliation, joy, delivering justice and meaning are all sentiments that shape political behaviour and therefore, emotions can be disregarded neither from general decision-making nor from any form of political behaviour. Even if the ideal speech conditions that are proposed by Habermas practically take place, the emotions would never leave the stage during the very processes of deliberation, neither should they. Empathy, for example is required to build consensus since it would not be enough to only understand what the others have to say for a reconciliatory and solution-seeking act. Without engaging with the others in their feelings, experiences and beliefs, and positioning the self in their situation, the debates will end up irrelevant to the problems that others are suffering from.

The exclusionary nature of liberal consensus lies at its very heart, with its claims on rationality and reasonableness. Mouffe attacks the liberal consensus on this front through its

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<sup>101</sup> Fisher D. Stephen, "Definition and Measurement of Tactical Voting: The Role of Rational Choice", *British Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 34, No. 1, 2004, p. 152-166. In this article Fisher uses the concept of tactical voting interchangeably with the strategic voting and evaluates it under the rational choice approach, which strives to maximize the utility while minimizing the cost.

<sup>102</sup>Glover, Robert W., "Of Virtues and Values: Sympathy, Empathy, and Agonistic Respect in Recent Democratic Theory", *American Political Science Association 2011 Annual Meeting Paper*, 2011, p.2.

<sup>103</sup>*Ibid*, p. 12.

implicit assertion of neutrality: “In politics the very distinction between 'reasonable' and 'unreasonable' is already the drawing of a frontier; it has a political character and is always the expression of a given hegemony. What is at a given moment deemed 'rational' or 'reasonable' in a community is what corresponds to the dominant language games and the 'common sense' that they construe.”<sup>104</sup>For Mouffe such a distinction would create a set of practices which become naturalized and are protected from critical assessment and oppositional action. Moreover, the dominant groups can easily define their perspectives as rational and exclude the others by labelling them as irrational or extremist. Since the norms are cultivated through power relations, no *rational* consensus can be taken as free from power relations and structures of domination in the society. Therefore, no consensus can be sanctioned as an ultimate shape of political thought or practice. In the exclusions of liberalism through claiming an argument irrational, lie the existing power relations' efforts to disqualify possible challenges. “This argument against rationalism is thus underpinned by ontology of power, in which difference as disagreement (beyond what is characterized as reasonable) dissolves into difference as a challenge to dominant power-relations.” The powerful have easier access to authority and therefore add the weight of state apparatuses to the already existing asymmetry in public sphere in their favour. Since the building blocks of human reasoning such as; “true”, “normal”, “natural”, “good”, “useful” and “beautiful” are socially constructed, power relations can never be eliminated from reason. Therefore, it is a *reasonable* claim to say that every consensus favours the powerful groups at the expense of the underprivileged.

In practical terms, one has to acknowledge that conflict and possibility of violence cannot be fully eliminated from human organizations. In this regard Glover offers the concept of agonistic respect which “...occurs when political actors reach an appreciation of the fact that their own self-definition is bound with that of others, and recognize the degree to which each of these projected identities is profoundly unstable and contestable... For agonists, virtually any mode of political communication which does not impose itself through violence or intimidation, and respects the rights of others to respond, can contribute to democratic legitimacy and prevent the impulse to marginalize and silence divergent identities.”<sup>105</sup>Such a respect becomes critical in divided societies such as Turkey, in terms of recognition of radically different and irreconcilable identities.

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<sup>104</sup>Mouffe Chantal, *The Return of the Political*, New York, Verso, 1993, p. 143.

<sup>105</sup> Glover Robert W., (2011), *ibid.*, p. 19.

Mouffe elaborates on the restrictive effect of rational consensus: “All controversial issues are taken off the agenda in order to create the conditions for a "rational" consensus... To envisage politics as a rational process of negotiation among individuals is to obliterate the whole dimension of power and antagonism- what I call 'the political' - and thereby completely miss its nature... To negate the political does not make it disappear; it only leads to bewilderment in the face of its manifestations and to impotence in dealing with them.”<sup>106</sup> Therefore, its practical possibility aside, the liberal rational consensus would have a depoliticizing effect on society which is not desirable in democracies, which essentially require citizens as active participating political agents. In other words, agonistic democracy has a *domesticating effect* on extremist groups and ideologies. As the driving engine of democracy, contestation keeps pluralism alive and maintains the system open for oppositional or underrepresented groups and prevents their resort to violence.

Agonism presupposes that it is impossible to promote the interests of certain groups or classes of people without excluding the others. Furthermore, the absence of political frontiers, on which democratic battle takes place, is not a desirable thing since the void in their absence may easily be exploited by violent extremists and political adversaries may turn into all-out enemies. At this point one also has to acknowledge that agonism too requires a consensus on the rules of the game, as mentioned above. Otherwise, the political frontiers may turn into antagonistic and possibly violent platforms of competition. What matters for the agonistic understanding of democracy is that the inevitable exclusions of human organization must be acknowledged for what they are rather than ignoring or hiding under the hegemonic claims of rationality.

Another critique of agonism towards deliberative democracy regards the depoliticizing effect of the latter. Agonism negates the definition of democracy as an ever-fresh effort of reconciliation and transcension of us *versus* them kind of polarization. It is more about establishing a system in which the opponents promote their own interest without violating the boundaries determined by the system. The nature of politics is largely determined by an agonistic struggle, which envisages an ever-fresh competition between adversaries who regard each other as legitimate yet act to win. The rules of the game are predominantly agreed upon and actors accept the main principles of the political settings in which they compete. Agonism acknowledges that it is possible -or probable depending on the circumstances- that the political actors might aim at transforming the system altogether to re-institutionalize it in their

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<sup>106</sup>Mouffe Chantal (1993), *ibid.*, p. 140.

own favour. The regime change in Turkey from Parliamentary to Presidential system in July 2017<sup>107</sup> that has been conducted by a small margin of votes sets an example to such manifestations of agonistic struggle.

The moralist and deliberative vision of public space is dangerous because it tends to exclude particularistic (ethnic, cultural etc.) or non-negotiable demands therefore make them vulnerable towards violent interpretations and extremism. Recognizing the legitimacy of the “marginal” demands that would be labelled as irrational by deliberative democracy, agonism keeps them within the democratic system as long as they don’t entail violence. In this perspective, democracy regulates the hegemonic competition between the adversaries and tames its destructive capacity. Agonism “aims at deflating conflicts through inclusion and politicization but without erasing them”<sup>108</sup> with the idea that when politicized, the conflicts are less likely to turn antagonistic. As Turkish Republic was founded with an agenda of civilisational transformation, (explained in the next Chapter) it excluded the identities and ways of life that did not fit into this program of transformation, *i.e.*, Kurds and religious conservatives from the public space. The public space had become the construction site of a monolithic identity and way of life, that is, until the AKP has challenged it in the reformist period through a competitive perspective reminiscent of agonism. AKP’s political success, therefore, can easily be related to its mobilization of these previously excluded groups and politicizing them.

Agonism, on the other hand, is not without flaw even at the theoretical level. The fundamental difference between agonism and antagonism is Mouffe’s thought who fails to disclose how agonism transforms antagonism into peaceful competition in the absence of a shared symbolic space between the “enemies”<sup>109</sup>. Another critique is about the *near-celebratory* attitude of agonism towards conflict. Essentialization of conflict at government level may bring hindrances in reconciliation of conflicts at societal level, which would end up with *over-politicization* of social problems. Institutionalizing conflicts through politics could entrench them at societal level through formation of hostile political identities. In deeply

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<sup>107</sup> “In April 2017, the Turkish population narrowly approved the constitutional changes necessary to transition to a presidential system, by 51.4% to 48.6%, in a referendum marred by statistical anomalies and allegations of electoral fraud...” See details here: <https://www.iiss.org/publications/strategic-comments/2018/turkeys-new-presidential-system>.

<sup>108</sup> Kalyvas Andreas, “The democratic narcissus: The agonism of the ancients compared to that of the (post)Moderns”, Andrew Schaap (ed.), *Law and Agonistic Politics*, Surrey, Ashgate, 2009, p. 35.

<sup>109</sup> Erman Eva, “What is wrong with agonistic pluralism: Reflections on conflict in democratic theory”, *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, vol. 35, no. 9, 2009, p. 1039-1062.



divided societies like Turkey<sup>110</sup>, “the political” may have deteriorating effects on society. The delicate balance, as proposed by agonists, between the affirmation and negation of the opponent has multiple times deteriorated into violent clashes.<sup>111</sup> Furthermore, agonistic view envisages a tension within the political subject. While the subject is imagined as a politically active agent to defend her position, which implies a firm belief in political identity, she is also expected to recognize the groups that deem hostile to her position that necessitates the presence of a strong common ground of symbols and daily practices, the vital functions of which are neglected by agonistic perspective.

Despite all the points that are subject to criticism, agonism stands as a more fitting approach than deliberative democracy to study Turkey whose political culture and heritage indicate a weak consensus capacity and a public space that doesn't function properly. Alongside the absence of conditions for *ideal speech situation* as proposed by Habermas, the historically weak and recently retrogressed<sup>112</sup> civil society also limits the use of public space and confines the political activism to political space. Extremely low inter-personal trust<sup>113</sup> is another factor that brings significant hindrance to consensus oriented deliberation in the country.

Agonism also bears significant normative value for the Turkish case as it maintains the political space open for dissidence and promoting socio-political pluralism. If *national identity* is regarded as a function of *common sense*, which then is regarded as a function of what is socio-politically perceived as *rational*; the common sense can be regarded as responsible for the exclusionary attitude towards different groups in different periods; such as, Kurds, conservatives, secularists, LGBT individuals, Gülenists etc. Therefore, what Turkey needs is not further establishment of this exclusionary and unfair common sense but an

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<sup>110</sup> Turkey has been regarded as a divided country by many scholars. A popular definition of the country, voiced by Turkish citizens and state officials, “a bridge between the East and West” defies yet acknowledges this division. An account of the divided nature of the country and its historical trajectory are presented in the next chapter.

<sup>111</sup> Especially 1970s were marked by violent conflicts between the left and right wings of the political spectrum which ended by a military coup in 1980.

<sup>112</sup> The *European Commission Turkey 2018 Report* discloses the recent deterioration in the civil society sector and expresses serious concern on the overall situation of civil society in Turkey. The issue is scrutinized in detail in the Second Part of this dissertation. For the details of the report, visit: <https://www.ab.gov.tr/siteimages/kapbtblolar/20180417-turkey-report.pdf>

<sup>113</sup> *World Value Survey of Our World in Data* indicates that, for the year 2014, those who agreed that “most people can be trusted” constitute 12% of Turkish society. It is estimable that the situation worsened after the coup attempt in 2016 and the following polarizations within the society. See for details: <https://ourworldindata.org/grapher/self-reported-trust-attitudes?tab=map&time=1993..2014&country=TUR>

agonistic understanding of politics that keeps the public and political space open for the representation of excluded groups.

#### 1.4. Discourse as Cause and Effect of Politics

Politics deals with making decisions on the distribution of social and materials goods, which are limited by nature. Therefore, it is a competition for scarce resources, in which different social and political formations present their bids and claims. Since the scarcity of resources cannot be matched with these bids and claims, decisions on their distribution inevitably get controversial and adversarial, details of which have been shared above, in the part that expounds on Agonism. Control of these resources, then, requires *strategies to obtain them* and *arguments to justify*. As discourse involves both the strategies – mostly implicitly- and the arguments –mostly explicitly-, it is an essential element of politics. In other words, discourse co-extends with the whole length of political process from its causation to the effects that it creates.

James P. Gee offers a rather comprehensive definition: “ ‘Discourses’ with a capital ‘D,’ that is, different ways in which we humans integrate language with non-language “stuff,” such as different ways of thinking, acting, interacting, valuing, feeling, believing, and using various symbols and objects to enact a particular sort of a socially recognizable identity.”<sup>114</sup> Gee explains the existence of a discourse with the existence of a particular social identity and a particular action that is to say, a discourse is about *who-doing-what*<sup>115</sup>. Involving many elements besides the text, a discourse is “a ‘dance’ that exists in the abstract as a coordinated pattern of words, deeds, values, beliefs, symbols, tools, objects, times, and places and in the here and now as a performance that is recognizable as just such a coordination.”<sup>116</sup>

Brian Paltridge underlines the mutually constructing nature of discourse and social reality in a constructivist framework reminiscent of the Structuration Theory of Anthony Giddens: “The texts we write and speak both shape and are shaped by these practices. Discourse, then, is both shaped by the world as well as shaping the world... It is shaped by the people who use the language as well as shaping the language that people use.”<sup>117</sup> This approach is particularly suitable for the analysis of political discourse since politics itself has similar relations with society, that is to say, it affects the society and is affected by it.

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<sup>114</sup> Gee P. James, *An Introduction to Discourse Analysis: Theory and Method*, London, Routledge, 2010, p. 29.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 30.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 36.

<sup>117</sup> Paltridge Brian, *Discourse Analysis*, New York, Bloomsbury Publishing, 2012, p.7.

Therefore, as Jaworski and Copeland argue, discourse “is language use relative to social, political and cultural formations – it is language reflecting social order but also language shaping social order, and shaping individuals’ interaction with society.”<sup>118</sup> Robin Wooffitt offers a similar explanation on the relations between the discourse and social reality. For him discourse is basically a set of “practices **through** which we represent the world also constitute its properties: discourse is a constructive and constitutive medium, and brings the world into being”<sup>119</sup>. Ian Parker sees discourse through its function and effect, and argues that “discourse constructs ‘representations’ of the world which have a reality almost as coercive as gravity, and, like gravity, we know of the objects through their effects.”<sup>120</sup> Parker here warns against the abstract looking nature of the discourse and lays the emphasis on the concrete results that it bears.

### 1.5. Discourse Analysis

Discourse analysis primarily aims at identifying the prevailing discourses in a specific field at a given space and time and disclosing how socio-political reality is constructed through them. Emphasis is laid on what purposes are served in what ways and using which tools. Inevitably, it is embedded in a linguistic context: “When a discourse or account is analysed, the researcher may be looking at what type of language is being used, what sorts of ideas underlie the text and how those ideas are demonstrated in the language. Some researchers have used discourse analysis to study... how ideas are socially constructed through the way people think, speak about and experience the social world around them.”<sup>121</sup>

Discourse analysis falls in line with the overall constructivist approach of this study with its emphasis on actors’ choices as major determiners in the production and consumption of the discourse. It doesn’t disregard systemic impositions on any political narrative but focuses on agency of political actors in its analysis of power relations: “...A proper understanding of the argumentative nature of political reasoning explains how agency and structure are connected: *structures provide agents with reasons for action*. Power itself provides such reasons and can only be understood in relation to how it enters agents’

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<sup>118</sup>Jaworski, A., Coupland, N. “Introduction: Perspectives on discourse analysis”, A. Jaworski, N. Coupland (Eds), *The Discourse Reader*, London, Routledge, 2006, pp. 1-37.

<sup>119</sup>Wooffitt Robin, *Conversation Analysis and Discourse Analysis*, London, Sage, 2005, p. 97.

<sup>120</sup> Parker Ian, *Discourse Dynamics: Critical Analysis for Social and Individual Psychology*, London, Routledge, 1992, p. 8.

<sup>121</sup> Matthews Bob, Ross Liz, *Research Methods: A Practcial Guide for Social Sicences*, Essex, Pearson, 2010, p. 391.

reasoning process.”<sup>122</sup> This perspective is helpful in the analysis of the political manoeuvres of actors in the existing regime. The AKP, as an actor that can best be defined socially conservative yet politically revisionist must be analyzed in the context of systemic constraints in its reformist period and systemic incentives (i.e. destruction of separation of power in favour of the Party) in its authoritarian turn.

In a general framework, James P. Gee offers “seven building tasks of language” to be used in the analysis of language in use, which are; *significance, practices, identities, relationships, politics, connections, and sign systems and knowledge*<sup>123</sup>. The analysis can address questions regarding all these tasks attributing different importance on each or use them in a selected way depending on the context and the issues that are being analyzed. Gee reminds that “all these buildings tasks are integrally linked to each other and often mutually and simultaneously supported by the same words and phrases”<sup>124</sup>.

Any discourse analysis requires inclusion of not only *the text* as the linguistic dimension of the discourse but also *the context*, which practically stands for every relevant thing other than the text. Context involves the position and title of the speaker or writer, the position of the audience, the platform that the utterance is made (i.e., battlefield, parliament, company meeting, negotiation table, dinner table, classroom etc.), the institutional orientation of the utterance, commonly shared meanings and symbols etc. Therefore, it is extremely difficult to designate a boundary for the context and this renders the analysis open to contestation, rejection, approval or revision.

Gee offers “form-function correlations”, “situated meanings” and “figured worlds”<sup>125</sup> as the main pillars of inquiry into discourse. While the *form* refers to words, phrases and their configurations within the utterance, the *function* primarily deals with the intended meaning. In any discourse analysis, the analyst seeks consistence between the form and the function regardless of the context. The contextualized or *situated meaning* is the most important part of discourse analysis since it has a higher level of specificity and it involves the intention of the speaker as well as the position of the audience. As mentioned above, the difficulty of drawing boundaries to the context and its interpretation is a major issue at this level and the analyst has the obligation to keep that in mind. *Figured world* is a space of interpretation that is socially

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<sup>122</sup> Fairclough N., Fairclough I., *Political Discourse Analysis: A method for Advanced Students*, New York, Routledge, 2012, p. 12.

<sup>123</sup> Gee P. James (2010), *Ibid*, pp. 17-19.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid*, p. 25.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid*, p. 63.

created and involves certain acts, actors and their evaluations. Meaning is created in this interpretative space and significance is attributed to people and actions. It basically defines a collectively shared 'normal' for a group of people.

A key notion in the analysis of political behaviour forms around the concept of *opinion*. Opinions refer to beliefs about certain things on their being true or false without verification by any reasonable method. That is to say, "instead of being established to be true or false by straightforward truth criteria about which reasonable people agree, such beliefs are supported by arguments that make the belief more or less plausible, credible or acceptable."<sup>126</sup> Thus, there is a certain level of subjectivity, which means, regardless of how firm the person believes in a certain claim or judgement, opinion essentially is a derivative of collectively shared values as well as personal ones.

Due to evasive nature of the concept, some scholars argue that every discourse is political; yet, this bears the risk of turning the concept into an empty signifier. Another problem may lie in the other end of specificity spectrum, that is to say, over-specification of the concept which confines the analysis of political discourse to the utterances of politicians. As the "...discourse is not simply a set of ideas: it enhances its credibility by linking itself with social institutions and practices."<sup>127</sup> Therefore, the analysis of the discourse should include practical results as an integral part as well. It also involves scrutinizing the language-in-use and other representations in the cognition of the socio-political actors. The missing link in the theoretical studies on the discourse is the social cognition that acts as an interface between discourse and power relations. Discourse analysis bears difficulties since "it requires true multidisciplinary and an account of intricate relationships between text, talk, social cognition, power, society and culture"<sup>128</sup>.

Since this thesis bears the task of analyzing a political discourse, it lays the emphasis on the intricate and historically established relations between power and language, which entails knowledge and discourse. Foucault's perspective on discourse lays the emphasis on power relations and builds the analysis in a historical trajectory. He embeds the discourse in a

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<sup>126</sup> Van Dijk Teun A., "Discourse, Opinions and Ideologies", *Current Issues in Language & Society*, vol. 2, no. 2, 1995, p. 115-145.

<sup>127</sup> Skilling Peter, "Everyday emergency: crisis, unease and strategy in contemporary political discourse", *Critical Policy Studies*, vol. 8, no. 1, 2014, p. 61-77.

<sup>128</sup> Van Dijk Teun A., "Principles of Critical Discourse Analysis", *Discourse & Society*, vol. 4, no.2, 1993, p. 249-283.

context where it is created as *knowledge*, and evaluates it through its power-effects<sup>129</sup>. As Erdoğan has exploited and weaponized the reservoir of conservative values in an ends-oriented pragmatic manner in his discourse and turned them into offensive and defensive means, evaluation of his discourse through its power-effect is crucial for this study, and so it is aimed to be done. Having recognized the power-effect of this reservoir, he positioned himself as “the voice of voiceless masses and the friend of the outcast”<sup>130</sup>. As the conservative masses who felt victimized by the secularist establishment identified with his rather peripheral stance he maintained the peripheral and “man of the people” language even after he became the only hegemonic figure in the country.

## 1.6. Critical Discourse Analysis

In line with Foucault, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) -primarily- deals with power relations and aims to disclose the formations of these relations through language. In other words, it aims to “expose the hidden ideological presuppositions of political speech and argument”<sup>131</sup>. For the CDA, the language-used reflects and constitutes specific social practices that have political implications, directly or otherwise, that is to say, it empowers and restrains certain outcomes. As a relatively recent domain of study, CDA is pioneered by scholars like Norman Fairclough, Ruth Wodak and Teun Van Dijk whose work sets the perspective and informs the analyses of discourse in the examination of AKP and Erdoğan.

Van Dijk underlines the power dimension of the discourse: “CDA states that discourse is socially constitutive as well as socially conditioned. Furthermore, discourse is an opaque power object in modern societies and CDA aims to make it more visible and transparent.”<sup>132</sup> Ruth Wodak adds the transparent power object in the debate and argues that CDA analyzes “opaque as well as transparent structural relationships of dominance, discrimination, power and control as manifested in language.”<sup>133</sup> The main focus of the inquiry of CDA, therefore, lies at the formation, legitimation and naturalization of political power which involves exclusions and social inequalities in all its possible forms.

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<sup>129</sup> Hook Derek, “Discourse, Knowledge, Materiality, History: Foucault and Discourse Analysis”, *Theory and Psychology*, vol. 11, no. 4, 2001, p. 521-547.

<sup>130</sup> See an early version of such statements from 1997: <https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/erdogan-sessiz-yiginlarin-sesiyim-39278715>

<sup>131</sup> Finlayson Alan, “Political Science, Political Ideas and Rhetoric”, *Economy and Society*, vol. 33, no. 4, 2006, p. 528-549.

<sup>132</sup> Blommaert Jan, Bulcaen Chris, “Critical Discourse Analysis”, *Annual Review of Anthropology*, vol. 29, no. 1, 2000, p. 447-466.

<sup>133</sup> Wodak Ruth, “Critical Linguistics and Critical Discourse Analysis”, Zienkowski Jan et al. (Eds) *Discursive Pragmatics*, JonhBenjamins Publishing Company, Amsterdam, 2011, p. 53.

Since, “Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is a type of discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context”<sup>134</sup>, the researcher often times takes position before, during or after the research. This perspective may even attribute an emancipatory role to CDA, that is to say, in the presence of social inequality and domination, the researcher may ‘resist’ the existing power configuration with an agenda of changing it for the underprivileged or dominated groups. When the researcher is socio-politically positioned it should be recognized rather than hiding behind a facade of objectivity, as she may also turn into a political actor through her analysis<sup>135</sup>.

In his seminal work, *Discourse and Social Change*, Norman Fairclough proposes a social theory of discourse and frames a method for its analysis, which is regarded as “most elaborate and ambitious attempt”<sup>136</sup> of theorization in the field of CDA. He uses a three dimensional schema<sup>137</sup> to disclose and analyze the discourses: The first dimension focuses on the linguistic aspects and overall organization of the discourse as a text. Word selection, grammatical structure, internal consistency and sensibility, and level of complication fall in this dimension. The second dimension takes discourse as an entity that is created, promoted and consumed in the society. This dimension links the discourse to its context and deals with intertextuality, which as a discourse style, links different discourses through open and covert references. The third one deals with socio-political effects of the discourse and discloses the elements of power relations, inequality and hegemony from the discourse. In brief, CDA primarily deals with socio-political problems through analyses of discourses that are essentially derivatives of power relations. In his reformist period Erdoğan employed a culturally conservative yet politically revisionist discourse to promote the interests of peripheral conservative masses (and of course, that of the power bloc that he represented) that were seeking economic and political significance. In the authoritarian period, however, he voiced a state-centric and nationalist conservatism that was less peripheral, more power-laden and essentially oppressive. Consistency in the analysis of the AKP primarily goes through the extraction of underlying power relations of rather inconsistent discourse of the AKP and this is where the CDA exhibits its prominence.

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<sup>134</sup> Van Dijk Teun A., “Critical Discourse Analysis”, Schiffrin D. et al (Eds), *The Handbook of Discourse Analysis*, Massachusetts, Blackwell Publishing, 2001, p. 352.

<sup>135</sup> Wilson John, “Political Discourse Analysis”, Schiffrin D. et al (Eds), *The Handbook of Discourse Analysis*, Massachusetts, Blackwell Publishing, 2001, p. 411.

<sup>136</sup> Blommaert Jan, Bulcaen Chris (2000) *ibid.*, p. 447-466.

<sup>137</sup> Fairclough Norman, *Discourse and Social Change*, Cambridge, Blackwell Publishing, 1992, p. 29.

## 1.7. Discourse as The Medium of Power, Exclusion and Crisis Management

Ideological struggle is essentially a power struggle, which manifests itself largely as a struggle of language and discourse. Different ideologies therefore, compete to dominate the discourse, and the dominant discourse tends to change the common sense towards its own claims of just order. Only through changing how people think about themselves, the rule becomes sustainable and entrenched in society. “In this sense, common sense in its ideological dimension is itself an effect of power. What comes to be common sense is thus in large measure determined by who exercises power and domination in a society or a social institution.”<sup>138</sup> The common sense here is the result of naturalization of the discourse, which seems to shed its ideological nature in the later phases of the process of naturalization and helps legitimize the underlying power relations. Differentiating the underlying power relations from the superficial yet popularly accepted common sense constitutes a fundamental part of the CDA.

### 1.7.1 Discourse and State Institutions

The discourse then is intertwined with the institution that it runs, and appears as the institution itself. Once established enough, such institutions claim to be outside the ideological struggles despite the fact that they are *the established effects of ideological struggles*. They can also be regarded as the materialized forms of control of state and society by a certain ideology or worldview in a sustainable fashion. From a critical perspective, the traditional Marxism frames state institutions as *state apparatuses* and differentiates it from the *state power*. The state apparatuses, however, exist primarily to maintain the state power through coercing the subjugated classes. Louis Althusser finds this perspective too descriptive, one-dimensional (that it only focuses on coercion) and superficial, and offers theoretical contribution with his conception of *Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs)*<sup>139</sup>. Althusser frames the Marxist conception of state apparatuses, such as; the army, courts, police etc., as *Repressive State Apparatuses (RSAs)* and assigns them the role of coercion on behalf of the ruling classes. Yet, he claims that the workings of the state are much more complex and offer another set of state apparatuses that primarily focus on creating consent rather than exercising coercion. ISAs include education system, religious institutions, news and media apparatuses, publications, civic associations, cultural production and even the family

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<sup>138</sup> Fairclough Norman, *Language and Power*, New York, Longman, 1989, p. 92.

<sup>139</sup> Althusser Louis, *On the Reproduction of Capitalism: Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses*, London, Verso, 2014, p, 70-76.



structure. Just like the RSAs, the ISAs are materialized via institutions. “An Ideological State Apparatus is a system of defined institutions, organizations, and the corresponding practices. Realized in the institutions, organizations, and practices of this system is all or part (generally speaking, a typical combination of certain elements) of the State Ideology.”<sup>140</sup>

Both the RSAs and the ISAs are *discourse-driven apparatuses*. Their roles and desired effects in the system are largely determined by law, which, can also be regarded as a manifestation of discourse. Their practical functioning is framed by policies, which are more visible manifestations of discourse than the law. Althusser underlines the resilience of these apparatuses through major changes in the ruling elite and even the regime. He mentions bourgeoisie revolutions (1830, 1848) and military coups in France, and the Bolshevik revolution in Russia and claims that after all these fundamental changes, state apparatuses remained largely intact. The point that Althusser leaves unexplained is that in line with the political identity and interests of the ruling elite these apparatuses “re-arrange themselves” both in terms of orientation, scope of the authority and overall function, all of which are voiced and materialised through discourse. AKP’s transformation, the focus of research in this thesis, is tightly related to, that is to say, it was made possible by the re-arranging of state apparatuses. The institutions that the AKP initially defined oppressive, and wanted to abolish altogether, such as the High Education Board (YÖK), or the reforms that it started on high judiciary (Constitutional Court, and The Council of Judges and Prosecutors) and Turkish Armed Forces (TAF) in order to limit their influence on civilian politics, were re-directed into controlling them altogether rather than democratizing them. Therefore, the analysis of the re-arrangement of state apparatuses sheds vital light on the account AKP’s transformation. The relevant analysis is done in Part 2 in detail to disclose how the state apparatuses as materialized mediums of power are utilized through re-directing them, which became possible through discursive re-directions.

### **1.7.2. Discourse and Exclusion of the Opponents**

As discourses aim to persuade people on general or specific issues via their own descriptions of reality, the definitions, frames and metaphors, as building blocks of discourses, determine how people perceive reality through them. Then, the goals, and strategies that are taken as bridges to these goals, and the relevant action plans are designated in a consistence of varying degrees. For a discourse to be persuasive it must be built on a

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<sup>140</sup>*Ibid*, p. 77.

particular identity –regardless of being specific or general- and the shared values that underlie it. The persuasiveness and coherence of a discourse also depends on its links with the common sense that it is built upon. Common sense involves norms and expectations of the members of any group or community alongside assumptions; therefore, it plays a central role in interpreting the behaviours of others. It also must have an imagery of a collective aim, such as; a good society or a just political order, which also require certain basic assumptions on which relevant argumentations are built.

In the stipulations of Foucault, “in every society, the production of discourse is at once controlled, selected, organised and redistributed by a certain number of procedures whose role is to ward off its powers and dangers, to gain mastery over its chance events, to evade its ponderous, formidable materiality.”<sup>141</sup> He, then, elaborates on exclusion procedures through control over discourse and emphasizes the act of *prohibition* as a historically formed binary between *truth and falseness*, institutional constraints on the *will to truth* and another binary between *sanity* and *madness*. Be it intellectually refreshing and pushing the reason out of the box, Foucault’s analysis of exclusion is too abstract that it is difficult to identify and materialize the position, intent and messaging of the political actors, who produce, disseminate and implement the discourses. Therefore, a more palpable framework of analysis is employed in this thesis with the emphasis being placed on the practical outcomes of the procedures of exclusion, which proceeds backwards in a manner of reverse engineering to disclose the structural aspects of the discourses.

While such structural analysis is necessary for political analysis of a discourse, it is hardly enough. In the production and consumption processes of discourse, the content that is provided by a reservoir of values, beliefs, assumptions, positioning, hopes, fears, expectations etc., must also be examined. The success of the discourse is closely tied to its coherence in the context of this reservoir. Fairclough calls this reservoir as “members’ resources”<sup>142</sup> (MR), and draws strong links between MR and the interpretation of the discourse by its audience. MR contains basic attitudes, sentiments, acceptances, rationales, judgements, friend-foe implications, faith elements (or their denials) and other factors that shape the identities and relations of the members of any given society or rather a community. Therefore, MR is an interpretative reservoir that shapes the positioning, actions and relations of groups and individuals towards issues of public debate and with each other. In most cases a

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<sup>141</sup> Foucault Michel, “The Order of Discourse”, Robert Young (ed.) *Untying the Text: A Post-structuralist Reader*, Boston, Routledge and Kegan Paul Publications, 1981, p. 52.

<sup>142</sup> Fairclough Norman (1989), *Ibid*, p. 25.

society is too big and diverse to share a single and coherent reservoir. When the subject society is divided like Turkey<sup>143</sup>, it becomes evident that there is a multiplicity of MRs with fundamental differences.

These differences act as conceptual and therefore cognitive sources of political fault lines which are vulnerable to the exploitation of politicians. In the Turkish case, and more specifically in the case of the AKP that this study concerns, the exploitations vary from agonistic struggle to antagonistic all-out wars that aim at annihilation of certain groups. Details and concrete examples of such variance are given in the relevant parts of this study. The political elements in the MRs of different communities contain the *raw material* for modern political concepts such as; ideologies, civic duties and responsibilities, legitimacy and accountability of those in power, attitude toward the opposition etc. Therefore, MRs largely act as toolboxes of politics that the actors configure and reconfigure and utilize to the best of their interests.

### **1.7.3. Modalities of Exclusion: *Anti-Elite, Moral, Criminal, Practical and Existential***

From the perspective of core-periphery evaluation, AKP's transformation can be summarized as a change from *centripetal politics* to *centrifugal one*. The change primarily manifested itself and was carried through by the discourse, which transformed from a *peripheral and revisionist language* to a *language of establishment* which prioritizes and talks through state apparatuses. When the AKP was trying to disarticulate the old guard, that is to say, the secularist elite, it promoted a conception of power that is accountable and transparent, and could only be represented by the elected government. Therefore, the discursive exclusion of the party targeted the *core* of the state and society that constituted not only high level state organs but also the high culture. When the AKP consolidated itself enough to be *the establishment*, its ruling elite started employing a state-centric discourse to the extent of excluding their dissidence as the enemies of the state. With the level of consolidation, the Party established on the state institutions, there has become an understanding within the AKP that the state was intertwined with the Party and they started defending themselves *as and through* the state.

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<sup>143</sup>Huntington Samuel, "Clash of Civilizations", *Foreign Affairs*, 1993, vol. 72, no. 3, p.42. Huntington calls Turkey a torn country alongside with Mexico and Russia. In his book, Clash of Civilizations, Huntington brings Turkey to the fore among the three countries that he claims to be torn, Russia, Turkey and Mexico, and describes it as "the most obvious and prototypical torn country".

The periods of de-securitization and re-securitization follows this discursive change. In different periods the AKP followed different modalities of exclusion targeting different parties and social groups. During the de-securitization period (2002-2007), Erdoğan and the AKP aimed at disarticulating the secularist elite, and utilized a discourse that emphasized “the victimhood of the silent masses”<sup>144</sup> at the hands of and therefore contra secularist elite. This anti-elite language mobilized the masses who felt underrepresented in the public space and disenfranchised with the secularist settings of the Turkish Republic. Often times, Erdoğan portrayed himself as a “pariah in his own country”<sup>145</sup> in a representative manner on behalf of silent conservative masses.

Throughout the whole AKP rule, in all its periods, Erdoğan has attacked the secular opposition, mainly represented by the CHP, on moral grounds and excluded them over their lifestyle. This moral exclusion is tightly connected with the anti-elite exclusion, in other words, the secular elite is discredited for its lifestyle and exclusionary use of power. In his oft-used style, Erdoğan referred the secular opposition in a categorical manner as the negation of national identity, and described them in a variety of ways, such as; *monşer*<sup>146</sup>, *immoral people with no good manners*<sup>147</sup>, *hypocrites*<sup>148</sup>, *infidels*<sup>149</sup>, *rootless people who are neither local nor national in Turkey*<sup>150</sup>, etc.

Legal/criminal exclusion has been primarily implemented on pro-Kurdish political parties and civic associations. Erdoğan has always, that is to say including his reformist period, regarded them as less-than-legitimate actors and brought their legitimacy into the

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<sup>144</sup> Since his mayoral terms in Istanbul in mid-1990s, Erdoğan has presented himself as the “next-of-kin of the lonely people and the voice of the voiceless”. He has not abandoned this peripheral language even when he controlled the state and set the tune in every major socio-political debate from the core. Der Spiegel defines Erdoğan as a “political outsider” and representative of counter-revolution descending from a poor family lineage when he became Prime minister in 2003. (<https://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/as-election-approaches-erdogan-offers-harsh-words-for-germany-a-967773.html>)

<sup>145</sup> The expression, “you are a stranger in your own homeland and a pariah in your home country” belongs to the nationalist-conservative poet, Necip Fazıl Kısakürek, who has been countless times quoted by Erdoğan in public rallies, Parliament, press meetings etc. Kısakürek was mentioned so frequently that, perhaps, he constitutes the most prominent case of intertextuality for Erdoğan’s discourse, other than Holy Scripture. Kısakürek’s role in Erdoğan’s thought and action deserves a detailed examination, an account of which is provided in Part 2 of the thesis.

<sup>146</sup> The word *monşer* is an out-of-semantic adaptation of the French word, “mon cher” and means “secularist exclusivist bureaucratic elite” in Erdoğan’s semantics. See for an example, <https://www.yenisafak.com/video-galeri/politika/erdogan-bunlar-monser-18477>.

<sup>147</sup> See for an example, <https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x6lj5qw>.

<sup>148</sup> See for an example, <https://www.yenisafak.com/gundem/cumhurbaskani-erdogan-bunlar-iki-yuzlu-3505357>

<sup>149</sup> See for an example, <https://www.ensonhaber.com/cumhurbaskani-erdogandan-chpli-vekile-sert-tepki-2017-04-05.html>

<sup>150</sup> See for an example: <https://www.posta.com.tr/cumhurbaskani-erdogan-chp-nin-bakisi-yerli-ve-milli-degil-1408728>

political debate. Often times Erdoğan portrayed the pro-Kurdish political parties, such as; Democratic Society Party (DTP) and Peoples' Democracy Party (HDP) as extensions of terror organizations<sup>151</sup> that are no different<sup>152</sup> from the PKK. He describes the very existence of a pro-Kurdish opposition something questionable in the context of the PKK-related security concerns of Turkey.

There is also another type of exclusion which did not find its manifestation in the discourse yet, has always been there in the practice; the Alawite issue. As a non-Sunni group that constitutes roughly 10% of the population, the Alawis face discrimination in terms of having high level public posts and receiving official recognition<sup>153</sup> as a separate religious practice and therefore, receiving religious public service that is particularly designed for them. AKP did not initiate the systemic disadvantages that the Alawis have been going through; yet, it did not problematize and resolve them either, despite all the promises and workshops<sup>154</sup> organized on the issue.

The deepest and broadest exclusion of the AKP targeted the Gülen Movement. For a long time the GM and the AKP followed concerted action with similar political agendas which were primarily shaped by the efforts to disarticulate the secularist bureaucratic establishment<sup>155</sup>. By the year 2012, dissociation between the two started to emerge, and it was by the end of 2013, the AKP government was hit hard by the Gülenist establishment in judiciary via corruption investigations. Erdoğan portrayed the investigations as a judicial coup attempt<sup>156</sup> started following a policy of antagonism rather than agonism against the Movement. In a couple years, Erdoğan turned his former collaborator into an existential threat for the country and started a comprehensive witch hunt. The prosecution, that was largely carried out during the state of emergency (2016-2018) detained 511 thousand people, purged nearly 39 thousand public servants and bureaucrats and arrested nearly 31 thousand people as

<sup>151</sup> For an explicit examples of Erdoğan referring the leading elite of the HDP as terrorist, see, <https://www.ntv.com.tr/turkiye/cumhurbaskani-erdoganhdp-yonetenlere-terorist-diyorum,S4UseafH8kOtAkeRmJljzw>. In this

<sup>152</sup> Here, Erdoğan equates the HDP with PKK terrorist organization and its Syrian branch, PYD. <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2019/02/erdogan-equates-hdp-pkk.html>

<sup>153</sup> Olsson Tordet *al.* (Ed), *Alevi Identity: Cultural, Religious and Social Perspectives*, Routledge, London, 2005, preface.

<sup>154</sup> Final declaration of these workshops was publicized in March 2011. The democratic nature and liberal leaning articles of the declaration was appreciated by the Alawite community. Yet they remained rhetorical and were largely ignored in the implementation. For details see, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/alevi-calistaylari-nihai-raporu-aciklandi-17422540>. The issue is examined in detail in the Second Part of this thesis.

<sup>155</sup> Yavuz M. H., Koç R., "The Turkish Coup Attempt: The Gülen Movement vs. the State", *Middle East Policy Council*, 2016, vol. 23, no. 4, p. 136-148.

<sup>156</sup> For Erdoğan's discursive defence of the corruption investigation, see: <https://www.dw.com/tr/17-25-aral-%C4%B1k-yolsuzluk-soru%C5%9Fturmas%C4%B1-m%C4%B1-darbe-giri%C5%9Fimi-mi/a-41827103>.

of March 2019<sup>157</sup>. The scope and depth of Erdoğan's campaign against indicate that he acted to annihilate the GM altogether as a social entity carrying out an existential exclusion.

All in all, Erdoğan effectively used exclusion through discourse and targeted each group in his opposition in a specifically set and tailor-made language. His accusations and underlying exclusion varied from anti-elite character to moral, legal-criminal, practical, and existential ones. It would be fair to claim that in most of them he has been able to set the tune of the political debate and tilted the playground in his favour. With these modes of exclusion, he has *mobilized* his supporters, put his party in an *order* and *defended* his cause or *offended* the opposition.

#### 1.7.4. Discourse as Crisis Management: *A Perpetuating State of Exception*

In the authoritarian turn of the AKP, Erdoğan's transgression of law and personalization of power are practised either as *de facto* practices of power abuse without legal amendments, or legitimated through amendments. The discourse that he employed during this period primarily aimed at bolstering and tightening his supporter base as well as alienating them from the rest of the society. In the coinage of Robert Putnam, he wanted to reinforce his electorate and played into *bonding capital*, rather than *bridging capital*<sup>158</sup>.

The crises that broke out in this period, which mostly broke out because of Erdoğan's oppressive rule, were managed by him in a manner that is reminiscent of Carl Schmitt's concept of *state of emergency* in which violation of law is justified by necessity as the Latin phrase put it, *necessitas legem non habet*<sup>159</sup>. In Schmitt's thought, the exception is determined by the *sovereign*, "who decides in a situation of conflict what constitutes the public interest or interest of the state, public safety and order, le salute public, and so on. The exception, which is not codified in the existing legal order, can at best be characterized as a case of extreme peril, a danger to the existence of the state, or the like. But it cannot be circumscribed factually and made to conform to a preformed law."<sup>160</sup>

Giorgio Agamben takes the debate where Schmitt leaves and coins a similar concept; *state of exception*. Similar to the state of emergency, state of exception is also built on

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<sup>157</sup> The hawkish interior minister of the time for the AKP, Süleyman Soylu, gave the official numbers in the Gülenist purge in a patriotic manner. See for details, <https://www.cnnturk.com/turkiye/icisleri-bakani-soylu-acikladi-fetoden-511-bin-kisi-gozaltina-alindi>.

<sup>158</sup> Putnam Robert, *Bowling Alone*, New York, Simon and Shuster, 2000, p. 19-21.

<sup>159</sup> "*Necessitas legem non habet*" is a Latin phrase that stipulates the violation of a law may be excused by necessity.

<sup>160</sup> Schmitt Carl, *Political Theology*, MIT Press, Cambridge, 1985, p. 6.

necessity; yet, it is difficult to define the state of exception because of its position between law and politics. Blurring the distinction between the major Constitutional forces, legislation, executive and judiciary, “state of exception appears as a legal form of what cannot have a legal form”<sup>161</sup>. Enabling the disappearance of boundary between politics and law, state of exception centralizes the power and vests in the leader for whom the legal regulations cease to have significant enforcement and constraint.

During the state of exception, the political discourse intensifies in line with the intensifying grip of the leadership on power. Since the Gezi protests of 2013, and due to an accumulation of authoritarian practices that started before the protests, Turkey has experienced a broad variety of crisis that shaped domestic politics and bore ramifications in international politics. As Erdoğan managed these crises via policies and discourses that bore excessive cost in terms of democratic credentials of the country, the analyses of these crises are essential for the examination of AKP’s transformation and overall evaluation of recent Turkish history.

Although the official state of emergency was declared after the failed coup attempt of July 2016, there was a cumulative degradation of rule of law and democracy prior to this date. The years between the Constitutional amendments of 2010 and the Gezi protests of 2013 can fairly be called as the *period of takeover*, during which Erdoğan established his power in state apparatuses. The period between 2013 and 2016 can be defined as the *period of challenge*, when the *de jure* exceptions have become *de facto* norms. In this period, Erdoğan cracked down on Gezi protests, declared a war on Gülenists and antagonized the Kurds. Post-coup period can then be defined as the *period of hegemony*; during which the state of exception intensified through the official declaration of state of emergency. A polarizing and exclusionary discourse has been used in this period to manage these crises and maintain power, details of which are provided in Part 2 of the dissertation.

### **1.8. Securitization: *Restricting the Public and Political Space***

In his 1983 article, while the Cold War was still present despite being in a lighter shade, Richard H. Ullman questioned the traditional way of perceiving security in military terms and argued: “The trade-off between liberty and security is one of the crucial issues of our era. In virtually every society individuals and groups seek security against the state, just as they ask the state to protect them against harm from other states. Human rights

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<sup>161</sup> Agamben Giorgio, *State of Exception*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2005, p. 1.

and state security thus is intimately related.”<sup>162</sup> This perspective argues against the established reductionist security conception that ignores non-military threats, leaves most domestic threats unattended, and therefore decreases overall level of security. In the same paper Ullman offers a simple yet comprehensive definition of threat and argues that for something to be a threat to national security it should *threaten the quality of life* of the citizens of a country and *restrict the policy choices* of government and non-governmental entities, such as; individuals, groups and civil society actors.

A more recent perspective that further broadens Ullman’s approach forms around the concept of *securitization*. Securitization adds economic, social and environmental dimensions to the security debate<sup>163</sup>. Beyond broadening a more fundamental distinction of securitization approach lies in the very process of defining the *threat*. Rather than taking the threats and other security issues as objective and extrinsic reality, securitization theory builds itself on identification of the issues such as threats, and responses being taken as a result of these identifications. Reminiscent of the concept of reverse engineering in mechanical sciences securitization theory deconstructs the threat construction in the context of the interests of the relevant parties.

The concept of securitization was developed laying the emphasis upon the socio-political nature of security by the Copenhagen School under the leadership of Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver. The School, then, underlined the constructivist nature of security policies where different socio-political actors compete in defining the threats and taking measures and positions against them. “In naming a certain development a security problem, the ‘state’ can claim a special right, one that will, in the final instance, always be defined by the state and its elite... Power holders can always try to use the instrument of *securitization* of an issue to gain control over it... and use it for specific, self-serving purposes...”<sup>164</sup> On normative grounds the School privileges the process of de-securitisation, which builds upon moving an issue from threat-danger modality into the realm of political debate where the issues are resolved through argumentation and compromise.

The securitization approach to study security politics was further developed by Wæver who linked security with discourse in a strong relationship and “made the definition of

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<sup>162</sup> Ullman H. Richard, “Redefining Security”, *International Security*, vol. 8, no. 1, 1983, p. 129-153.

<sup>163</sup> Buzan Barry et al., *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*, Lynne Rienner Publishers, Colorado, 1998, p. VII.

<sup>164</sup> Wæver Ole, “Securitization and Desecuritization”, Lipschutz Ronnie D. (ed), *On Security*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1998, p. 54-55.



security dependent on its successful construction in discourse”<sup>165</sup>. Building the conceptualization of security on discursive grounds and developing a sceptical approach to claimed objectivity of threat, securitization focuses on how the issues are presented as or made into threats and counter-measures are taken accordingly. Therefore, the process of securitization starts with discursive act (or speech act) and if necessary, continues with states of exception. “By uttering security, a state representative moves a particular development into a specific area, and thereby claims a special right to use whatever means are necessary to block it.”<sup>166</sup> So, when a socio-political actor “uses rhetoric of an existential threat and takes an issue out of what under those conditions is ‘normal politics’, we have a case of securitization. Thus, the exact *definition* and *criteria* of securitization is constituted by the inter-subjective establishment of an existential threat with a saliency sufficient to have political effects.”<sup>167</sup> Depending on the socio-political vulnerabilities any issue can be portrayed as a threat. If the issue can be presented as an existential threat in a persuasive fashion, then emergency measures and other actions that fall outside legal boundaries are justified. Furthermore, the existential threat prioritizes itself and “electrifies” the playground of politics either as a whole or part of it.

If the securitizing actor persuades the target audience, it practically gains permission and even support from them to go outside the boundaries of law and social norms. A successful process of securitization involves three major elements with clear causal links; *threat*, *persuasion* and *action*. In many situations, securitization does not aim at convincing everyone and there are two major reasons for this: First, politics always involves coercion alongside consent. Second, in some cases leaving the portions of society that may be affiliated with the threat out of persuasion discourse serves the process of securitization better since the whole process aims at excluding or antagonizing them.

Securitization often times comes with costs, such as; creating discontent among certain groups of society, elevating the debated issue to a position that can test the political establishment and its basic tenets<sup>168</sup>, and decrease the room for manoeuvre and flexibility for authorities that is, both discursively and politically. Furthermore, since securitization implies a deeper and broader state intervention, it also raises the costs in public management.

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<sup>165</sup> Buzan Barry, Hansen Lene, “Widening and Deepening Security”, Buzan Barry and Hansen Lene (Eds), *The Evolution of Security Studies*, University Press, Cambridge, 2009, p. 213.

<sup>166</sup> Waever Ole (1998), *ibid.*, p. 55.

<sup>167</sup> Buzan Barry, Hansen Lene (1998), *ibid.*, p. 24-25.

<sup>168</sup> Waever Ole (1998), *ibid.*, p. 75.

Therefore, states do not always use “securitization as coercion” but also “securitization as consent”. An analogy can be drawn between these two types of securitization and Louis Althusser’s ISAs and RSAs. Referring to Ullman’s definition mentioned above, a threat has a two-fold effect: *threatening the quality of life of the people* and *restricting the policy choices*. ISAs are frequently used to securitize issues, and create consent and collective will around them, while RSAs are used to coerce people into submit their otherwise-formed will into the basic tenets of political establishment that is called by the masses, state. The distinction between coercion and consent has not been underlined by the scholars of Copenhagen School in the context of securitization. Thus, the terms, “securitization as coercion” and “securitization as consent” stand as humble conceptual contributions of this dissertation to the literature on securitization studies. Being founded with a top-down nation building agenda, Turkey has used both concepts abundantly yet in a fluctuating trend depending on the ideology of the government and the attitude of the bureaucratic establishment on the issue being securitized. In the case of the AKP, the concept of securitization comes further to the fore because of the conceptual consistency that it offers to explain the transformation of the Party. To rehash, since the concept can extend in opposite directions with the use of de-securitization and re-securitization it has the capacity to frame the rather contradictory policies of the AKP in reformist and authoritarian periods in a coherent and consistent scheme. This is why it was chosen as the organizing conceptual reference for this dissertation.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter offered a perspective for the inquiry of AKP’s transformation and a theoretical framework to provide proper conceptual tools and consistency into the inquiry. Consistency is a crucial matter in this inquiry as the transformation of the Party has made many scholars and monitoring institutions revisit their initial takes on the Party and its leadership. Constructivism with its flexible subject oriented approach and emphasis on the roles of ideas and identities in the construction of power and interest offers a suitable overall theoretical mind map for this dissertation. The functioning analytical tools are provided by agonism, securitization and critical discourse analysis, securitization being the main axis of the investigation, while agonism sets the right parameters for the examination of Turkish political culture and CDA extracts the workings of power dynamics out of political discourse. As the mental structures of these three approaches are consistent with constructivism and since they are responsive to each other, they have the capacity to provide a coherent network of concepts for this study.

The following chapters start with creating a historical context for the formation of the AKP and explore into the conditions that facilitated its establishment. Then they delve into the carefully calculated positioning of its leadership and how they used it for legitimating themselves domestically and internationally as a post-Islamist cadre. After covering its rather successful period of cohabitation with the secularist bureaucracy in the first terms, the thesis then explores into AKP's patient yet decisive efforts of disarticulation in its second term. In the follow up, abandonment of the reformist agenda is seen through the lens of survival in power. The thesis studies the transfiguration of the AKP through the analyses of its discourses, alliances that it formed and dissolved and reconfiguration of Constitutional power organs and positions these changes on the conceptual axis of securitization.

## **Chapter 2**

### **The Formation of Justice and Development Party in a Historical Context**

#### **1.2.1. 19th Century Reforms: *The Tragedy of Turkish Soul***

Modernization of Ottoman-Turkish socio-polity brought many issues into the public space, many of which are still relevant as vibrant debates in Turkish Republic. There was a strong acceptance on the weakness of the state and serious doubt on its long-term survival among the ruling elite of the Ottoman Empire. Modernization then, emerged in a selective form of Westernization, because there were irreconcilable differences in faith systems, moral codes and habitus of the peoples of the Ottoman Empire and the Western socio-political formations. The primary aim of modernization was the survival of state; therefore, its scope was limited to administrative and legal system. A comprehensive package of re-organization, the *Tanzimat Reforms*, were endorsed in 1839, which “promised new laws guaranteeing life and property rights, prohibiting bribery, and regulating the levying of taxes and the conscription and tenure of soldiers. It (also) promised the enactment of legislation that would outlaw execution without trial, confiscation of property, and violations of personal chastity

and honour. Most significantly, they would apply to all Ottoman subjects, Muslim and non-Muslim alike.”<sup>169</sup>

Many state institutions created by Tanzimat reforms founded basic institutions of the modern state most which were inherited and adopted by Turkish Republic that was founded after the fall of the Empire. Postage Service (established in 1840), Law Enforcement (1845) and Fire Brigades (1874) are among them. More importantly, transition into a Constitutional system (1876) that limited the executive powers of the Sultan and regulated the workings of state machinery was put into effect in 1876<sup>170</sup>.

The reforms created a gradual retreat of religion (Islam) from legal-administrative structure and the mindset of the state. In 1859 *Mekteb-iMülkiye* (The School of State Affairs), the alumni of which constituted the backbone of ruling bureaucracy, was founded with a secular curriculum. The In 1858 the criminal cases were taken off the jurisdiction of Islamic Sharia courts and in 1868 an administrative court system was established that functioned independently from Sharia. In 1850 French Commerce Law and in 1864 the Maritime Law was adopted, further diminishing the function and influence of Sharia.<sup>171</sup>

The adoption of Western legal-administrative institutions was preceded by penetration of the mindset that underlies modernity into Ottoman educated elite. The penetration created various forms of hybridizations among the Ottoman elite which spanned from those who promoted a holistic embrace of the Western civilisation to the ones who rejected it altogether. A prominent group established by newly rising intelligentsia was the *Islamists* who believed that the cultural and moral heritage of the Empire must have been protected. Led by forerunners such as; Namık Kemal, Ziya Paşa, Şinasi and Ali Suavi, the Islamists wanted to *limit* Western influence to legal-administrative reforms and scientific advancements that would presumably enable material progress maintaining the Islamic essence of social norms. As they embraced and promoted certain (selective) Western socio-political norms, they found thereforms far too short for a systemic change within the Empire and believed that they lacked

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<sup>169</sup>Hanioğlu Şükrü, *A Brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire*, New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 2008, p. 72.

<sup>170</sup>Transition into Constitutional monarchy was not a unidirectional process. The Constitution that was promulgated in 1876 was suspended by the Sultan (monarch) of the time, Abdulhamid II in 1878 with the outbreak of Turko-Russian war.

<sup>171</sup>Cin Halil, *Tanzimat Döneminde Osmanlı Hukuk ve Yargılama Usulleri*, Ankara, Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, 1992, p. 19-23.

important elements of Western thought like freedom of thought and expression, sovereignty of people and consultation at state level<sup>172</sup>.

Considering that Kemal, as the representative figure of Ottoman Islamism, penned these ideas in 1872, when the regime was still an absolute monarchy, it becomes clear how progressive the Islamists of the Ottoman times were in terms of legal-administrative reforms. Kemal was trying to carve a philosophical-ontological basis out of Islamic Sharia for a political regime; therefore, it would be fair to argue that he took the initial steps of turning Islam into a political ideology.<sup>173</sup>In brief, the Islamists demanded Constitutional Monarchy and freedom, and embedded these demands in a religious discourse, which provided them grounds for justification to oppose the Sultan as the Caliph of the Muslims in whose persona absolute rule was vested. The religious discourse they employed also gave them a broader outreach that they started communicating with masses. Genesis of an intellectual class that justified itself in an Islamic context autonomously from the authority of Caliph-Sultan signified the early steps of public space formation.

For the Islamists who were then framed as Young Ottomans, “Tanzimat lacked a sophisticated philosophy to rely on or the grounds on which a kind of morality can be built. In a way, The Young Ottomans proposed Islamic philosophy to fill the void. For them, basic principles of democracy could be found in Islam.”<sup>174</sup>*Rather than an ideology, Islamism was a mass discourse, which became a political platform for opposition.* They had played the key role in transitioning from an Absolute Monarchy into a Constitutional one. Eventually they were disbanded and exiled multiple times into places like Paris, Vienna, London, Cyprus and Aegean islands by the Sultan, whose authority they were trying to make accountable. The suspension of the Constitution that they promoted and the exile ended their political significance.<sup>175</sup> The irony here is that they were exiled by a Sultan, Abdulhamid II who has promoted Islamism, but in an oppressive manner. The further irony is while the Young Ottomans would successfully represent the reformist period of the AKP, Abdulhamid II represents its authoritarian turn. In other words, the transformation of AKP carried the Islamists from the position of Young Ottomans to that of Abdulhamid II.

As the Islamists lost their influence, a secular Westernist group, Young Turks, started to emerge through newly founded modern schools and dominate state bureaucracy and

<sup>172</sup>Kemal Namık, *Osmanlı Modernleşmesinin Meseleleri*, İstanbul, İş Bankası Yayınları, , 2005, p. 222-224.

<sup>173</sup>Mardin Şerif, *Türkiye İslam ve Sekülerizm*, İstanbul, İletişim Yayınları, 2011, p. 58.

<sup>174</sup>Mardin Şerif, *Türk Modernleşmesi*, İstanbul, İletişim Yayınları, 2000, p. 88.

<sup>175</sup>Lewis Bernard, *Modern Türkiye'nin Doğuşu*, Ankara, TürkTarih Kurumu Yayınları, 2007, p. 155.

intelligentsia. Being heavily influenced by the ideas of Enlightenment, they created a new mindset that wanted to change the traditional heritage of the Empire with a Western culture, and therefore, proposed a much broader and deeper change<sup>176</sup>. They had become sceptical about religion and tradition as providers of truth content in the age of *reason and progress*. Their social vision centred on creating a unified nation in the Western sense out of the subjects of the already disintegrating Empire.<sup>177</sup>

Young Turks' thought found its organizational structure towards the end of 19th century. In 1889, a small group of students from Royal Academy of Medicine formed an underground organization, *İttihad-ı Osmani* (Ottoman Unity), in the fashion of Italian Carbonaries and Russian Nihilists<sup>178</sup>. Their reformism was heavily informed by positivism. "Any examination of their ideological background indicates traces of 19th century biological materialism that they acquired in the Academy. The basis of life and existence was formed by biological and physiological processes rather than God's creation."<sup>179</sup> Yet Young Turks were not against religion in a systemic sense nor were they consistent in their mindset on many debated issues. They were extremely pragmatic and did not hesitate manipulating the symbols of Islamic culture when they fit into their political programme.

As they rapidly grew within high education institutions and young officers of the army, they changed the name of their organization into The Committee of Union and Progress (*İttihatveTerakkiCemiyeti*, henceforth; CUP) and established a dominant position in the bureaucracy, specifically in the army. As of 1909, they had 850.000 members, most of which were ethnically Turkish, and 360 branch offices across the Empire<sup>180</sup>. In 1908, they forced Abdulhamid II, who had suspended the Constitution in 1878 in the first place, to reinstate it back<sup>181</sup>. In 1909, they won the majority in the new Parliament, reduced the Sultan into a figurehead with a Constitutional amendment and formed a government under which the Ottoman Empire joined the WWI.<sup>182</sup> Being zealously reformist and increasingly nationalist, the Young Turks had a steadfast political will and determination to pull the Empire out of its

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<sup>176</sup>Göle Nilüfer, *Modern Mahrem*, İstanbul, Metis Yayınları, 2011, p. 51.

<sup>177</sup>Mardin Şerif (2011), *ibid.*, p. 28.

<sup>178</sup>Initially secrecy was of the essence for the CUP. Even in the first official congress in 1908, they did not disclose the congress to the public and official authorities and kept the members of the executive board secret. See for details: <https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/ittihat-ve-terakki-cemiyeti>

<sup>179</sup>Mardin Şerif (2000), *ibid.*, p. 98-99.

<sup>180</sup>For a comprehensive analysis of CUP, see Feroz Ahmed's seminal book: *The Young Turks: The Committee of Union and Progress in Turkish Politics, 1908-1914*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2010.

<sup>181</sup>Shipp Ella, "The Committee of Union and Progress and World", *The Student Researcher: A Phi Alpha Theta Publication*, Vol. 2, no. 1, 2016, p. 7.

<sup>182</sup>Zürcher Eric, *Turkey; A Modern History*, London, I.B Tauris, 2004, p. 100-103.

semi-oriental lethargy and carve a strong modern state out of its remnants in a European style.<sup>183</sup>

Both the Young Ottomans (as Islamists) and Young Turks (as increasingly secularist) wanted to create a modern and preferably homogenous collectivity as the key driver of modernization process. Ahmet Cevdet Pasha, a key bureaucrat-intellectual in the late 19th century Ottoman Empire who led the codification of Sharia for the first time in history as an Islamic response to Westernization of legal system, wanted to create a homogenous Islamic citizenry that used the same vernacular<sup>184</sup>. He even wrote a book, *Belagat-ı Osmaniyye* (The Ottoman Grammar) to serve this purpose. Yet, the cultural and linguistic differences between the Muslim subjects of the Empire made it impossible to form a common vernacular. Being a realist, Cevdet Pasha realized the impossibility and started mentioning Turkishness as the basis of the envisaged collectivity and said: “As the Great State (the Ottoman Empire) is composed of various peoples... it is Islam that unites Arabs, Kurds, Bosnians and Albanians. Yet, the main power of the Empire comes from Turks. Their loyalty to royal family is required by both their religious and ethnic orientation. Therefore, their natural worth should be recognized by the royal family.”<sup>185</sup>

Cevdet Pasha seems to signify the initial stage of the evolution of Islamist (and conservative) thought in Turkish Republic as he acknowledged the importance of Turkishness with a precondition that that content of this new (national) identity is created by Islam. From among the three pillars of Western progress; scientific and industrial advancements, liberal political institutions like constitution and parliament, and a non-religious truth content, the Islamists defended adopting the first two while standing firm against the truth content. The secularist camp, on the other hand, saw the Western civilization as a whole and defended the adoption of the third one as well. These schools of thought and political traditions were not necessarily exclusive towards each other and Islamism, secularism and nationalism hybridized with different combinations. The traditions were named after the dominant elements in the combinations that constituted them<sup>186</sup> From among them, the one with Janus face was nationalism, because it has always had huge overlaps with both secularism and Islamism.

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<sup>183</sup>Butler A. Daniel, *Shadow of the Sultan's Realm: The Destruction of the Ottoman Empire and the Creation of the Modern Middle East*, Potomac Books, Washington DC, 2011, p. 24. The book was translated into Turkish by the author of the thesis but not published yet.

<sup>184</sup>Mardin Şerif (2011), *ibid.*, p. 62.

<sup>185</sup>Özcan Azmi, *Sultan 2. Abdulhamid'in Panislam Siyasetinde Cevdet Paşa'nın Tesiri*, Ankara, Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı Yayınları, 1997, p. 128.

<sup>186</sup>Safa Peyami, *Türk İnkılabına Bakışlar*, İstanbul, Ötüken Yayınları, 2019, p. 27.

The two irreconcilable perspectives on the nature of Turkish identity; secularism and Islamism, created a huge tension in political thought. Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar, a prominent literary figure with a sharp perspective that extends both directions who focused on the challenges that stem from the transformation of cultural foundations<sup>187</sup>, defines this tension as *the tragedy of Turkish soul*. He identifies the roots of this tragedy as follows: “On the one hand, we went to West with a political will supported by historic necessities. On the other hand we had a past which is impossible to ignore and give deaf ear when it starts to speak to us with all its essence.”<sup>188</sup> For Tanpınar, this was a trial for the Turkish soul that was conditioned by the struggle of the two civilisations; Islam and the West.

The Islamic-secular debate turned in favour of the latter as the Young Turks seized power with a silent coup in 1908 and reinstated the Constitution and the Parliament that were suspended in 1878. The Empire, then, went into WWI on the side of the Axis powers, and suffering a huge defeat, it was invaded by French, British and Greek armies. A young army officer, Mustafa Kemal, who was a Young Turk, organized a countrywide campaign (The War of Independence) against invaders, and after fighting in multiple fronts, led the army to victory. As the Turkish Republic was founded in 1923 under his leadership, the secularist camp established a political domination and silenced the Islamists, yet the tension was far from being over. The tragedy of Turkish soul was only going through its prelude.

### **1.2.2. Foundation of Republic: *Modernization through Secularist Nation Building***

Mustafa Kemal had a clear affiliation with Young Turks tradition, and shared the world view of the pragmatic secularist group within, who later dominated the tradition. Islam, in Kemal’s perspective, could be utilized as a platform of civic participation and social mobilization. However, even before the Republic was founded, secularism was mentioned as a key principle of the prospect state in the first covenant of The Republican People’s Party which was founded by him.<sup>189</sup> Yet, being a pragmatic idealist, he was aware of the fundamental position of Islam in society, he aimed at cultivating a passive and nationalized version of Islam. The deep and broad influence of religion on the formation of pre-political values was a fact and Mustafa Kemal and the Republican elite were aware of that fact as much as they wanted to change it. He tried to downgrade the role of religion from being the

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<sup>187</sup>Mardin Şerif (2011), *ibid.*, p. 80.

<sup>188</sup>Tanpınar Ahmet Hamdi, *Yaşadığım Gibi*, İstanbul, Dergah Yayınları, 2000, p. 40.

<sup>189</sup>Mardin Şerif (2011), *ibid.*, p. 75.



organizing principle for *life and beyond* to a passive element of identity that would not dominate the Turkish national character.

In line with the intellectual heritage of Enlightenment, Mustafa Kemal offered science and reason as the new organizing principle for everything in life. His signature phrase, “The most truthful guide in life is science” is carved at the entrance of every school in Turkey. With this statement, he implicitly excludes religion that had so far been the most significant organizing principle as well as provider of truth content. In his visit to the city of Kastamonu where he started the “clothing reform”, he said: “Turkish Republic cannot be the country of sheikhs, dervishes, disciples and lunatics. The truest path is the path of civilisation. Performing the requirements of the civilisation is enough to be human. I believe the sheikhs of *tarikats* will shut themselves down and regard their followers as mature people.”<sup>190</sup> Soon he banished the *tarikats*, where the Sufi traditions meet and amalgamate with folk Islam, with legislation at the end of 1925<sup>191</sup>.

Establishing a political hegemony as the founding leader of the Republic, Mustafa Kemal put state apparatuses into use for his social and political ideals, which were later unified into a world view (*weltanschauung*); Kemalism. Kemalism is a polity of a developmentalist nation building process which was predominantly informed by secularism in political sense and Enlightenment in terms of truth content. Not being confined into the political space, Kemalism penetrated into social life, and redefine collective identities and the overall public space under the magnetic field of the Western civilisation.<sup>192</sup>

Kemalism was named after and *materIALIZED* in the *near-mythical* persona of Mustafa Kemal, who later took the last name of Atatürk (meaning *the father of Turks*). His speeches and statements constituted a foundational framework for the new Republic with a civilizing mission: “*Gentlemen! The target ahead of us as a nation is becoming a civilized social entity in the most comprehensive meaning of the word. As you know, the value, dignity, freedom and future of every nation depend on and are proportional to civilized works it does.*”<sup>193</sup> The undeniable awareness of Western advancements in many fields as well as the deep

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<sup>190</sup>This statement was made two years after the Republic was founded. They disclose the comprehensive intervention that the Republican elite intended for a civilisational transformation. See for details: <https://www.atam.gov.tr/ataturkun-soylev-ve-demecleri/kastamonuda-ikinci-konusma>

<sup>191</sup>Kemal had portrayed the Sufi lodges as a representation of laziness and backwardness. Perhaps he was concerned about their socio-political influence against his authority too, yet he has never mentioned this concern. See for details: <https://www.atam.gov.tr/duyurular/tekke-zaviye-ve-turbelerin-kapatilmasi>

<sup>192</sup>Göle Nilüfer (2011), *ibid.*, p. 101.

<sup>193</sup>Extrtacted from *The Speech* (Nutuk) of Mustafa Kemal at the Parliament in 1924, quoted in *TürkModernleşmesi* (Turkish Modernization) by ŞerifMardin, 2000, İstanbul, İletişim Publication, p. 18.

acknowledgement of deficits in the Ottoman-Islamic socio-political heritage shaped the developmentalist character of the new Republic.

Being positioned between West and the Middle East, the Republican elite made a deliberate choice that favoured the former in socio-political and intellectual terms. The Middle East, for the ruling elite of the Young Republic, represented backwardness, weakness and chaos. The West, on the other hand was the materialization of human capacity through the advancements that it undertook.<sup>194</sup> Yet, the new Turkish elite did not aim at replicating any specific Western country or experience. They positioned themselves as the agents of Enlightenment, which they believed was a universal paradigm. Enlightenment was the driving engine of Westernization which was used interchangeably with modernization. The process of modernization that was undertaken by the intellectual and bureaucratic elite in Tanzimat era was embraced and furthered by the Republican elite as a project of civilisation.<sup>195</sup>

With a self-dictated role of civilizational transformation the Republic aimed at establishing a secular society alongside and through state policies.<sup>196</sup> The statements of Şükrü Kaya, the interior minister (1927-1938) of Atatürk until his death, summarize the perspective of the new regime on religion and secularism: “religions have completed their jobs and become obsolete. Therefore, they could not be revived.”<sup>197</sup> While Kaya denies any influence of religion on politics, he does not liberate religious thought and practice from encroachment of the state. For the new regime, “religion should be confined to conscience of the individuals and not intervene into material and mundane issues.”<sup>198</sup> However, Turkish secularism has not been formed on an anti-religion discourse and practice. It should rather be evaluated in the context of the newly established regime’s efforts to take religion under control reminiscent of the French revolution in 1789.<sup>199</sup>

Such an attempt would make the nation building unnecessarily difficult as it would be in clear conflict with the social structure of the Republic inherited from the Empire, which was predominantly pre-modern and religious in a traditional sense. Furthermore, neither a unified and regulated market run by bourgeoisie nor a society that shared broad collective

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<sup>194</sup>Lewis Bernard, *The Multiple Identities of the Middle East*, London, Orion Publishing, 1998, p. 136.

<sup>195</sup>Yavuz Hakan, *Modernleşme Oryantalizm ve İslam*, İstanbul, Büke Yayınları, 2000, p.17.

<sup>196</sup>Gözaydın İftar, *Din-Devlet İşleri ve Laiklik Sempozyumu*, İstanbul, FoksYayıncılık, 2013, p. 61.

<sup>197</sup>Goloğlu Mahmut, *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Tarihi II Tek Partili Cumhuriyet (1931-1938)*, İstanbul, Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2009, p.153.

<sup>198</sup>See for details:<http://ankaenstitusu.com/cumhuriyetimizin-seckin-bir-kadrosu-sukru-kaya/>.

<sup>199</sup>Akgönül Samim, *Azınlık: Türk Bağlamında Azınlık Kavramına Farklı Bakışlar*, İstanbul, 2011, Bgst Yayınları, p. 42

values was present. Therefore, neither the infrastructural requirements of modernity, i.e. a somewhat national economy, nor a collectively shared superstructure other than the religious narratives existed among the masses when the Republic was founded. The underlying forces of modernity were not present and there were fundamental differences between the norms and values of the elite and the masses. Therefore, the drive for modernization had to be provided by intellectual and political elite<sup>200</sup>. In the Turkish case, the elite was self-legitimized in acting on behalf of people, that is to say, the country was voted by a single party between 1923 and 1950. They initiated a set of reforms to accelerate the creation of a nation with their own preferences. In this endeavour state apparatuses and legal enforcement has been used deeply and broadly by the ruling elite. In established regimes, “the law is meant to institutionalize the social change and reconciliation. In Turkey however, it was meant to define and accelerate the processes of modernization.”<sup>201</sup> The following part scrutinizes the means, methods and narratives used by the state for the purposes of modernization during the *establishment* (single-party) and the *maintenance* (multi-party) period of Turkish Republic.

#### **1.2.2.1. Republican Reforms: *Securitization during the Establishment***

The foundation of Turkish Republic brought transformation in three major fields; state system, regime and society. In terms of state system, the transformation was from a federation-like empire to a unitary nation state. In societal terms the Republic represented a transformation from a multi-ethnic and multi-religious society of subjects to solidarity based and somewhat homogenous society of citizens under control.<sup>202</sup> In terms of the regime, the change was from an Islamically legitimated monarchy to a secular Republic with a *negating control* on religion that tolerated *Islam as a peripheral and anachronistic regulator of life*. The peripheral visibility of Islam provided some kind of utility through an internal dialectic for the superiority claims of secularist groups.

While the change in the state system was broadly accepted, the secularization of the society and building solidarity on the collective identity of Turkishness faced serious resistance from different segments of society. In order to break this resistance, the young Republic denied full representation to Kurds who challenged Turkishness as the largest non-Turkish population, and conservatives who challenged mass secularization of the society as the majority of population in post-Ottoman Turkish society. On the face of such resistance, the

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<sup>200</sup>Göle Nilüfer (2011), *ibid.*, p. 27.

<sup>201</sup>Göle Nilüfer (2011), *ibid.*, p. 104.

<sup>202</sup>Mardin Şerif (2011), *ibid.*, p. 153.

Republican elite did not soften their stance and resorted to enforcement utilizing the state capacity. Using the ISAs together with RSAs the new Republic then securitized the issues that were pertaining to its program of nation building and modernization which stipulated change at every level of analysis spanning from the identity of individual (as ideal Turkish citizen) to international orientation of the country. The totalitarian tendencies of the new regime are perhaps tightly correlated with the totalitarian nature of the change that it aimed.

Some factors facilitated the securitizing policies of the new regime: As the majority of the new state elite was constituted by the victorious leaders of the War of Independence, who “protected the Muslim population of the country” they had a sweeping legitimacy that included the conservative segments who did not actually share their world view. On the societal side neither there was a functioning civil society nor media and Western style bourgeoisie to keep the authorities accountable. On the basis of these advantages and under the near-mythical leadership of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk the new regime started a deep and broad project of social engineering.

The social engineering campaign started with disarticulation of the symbolic remnants of *ancient regime* in the state system. The sultanate (monarchy) was abolished even before the proclamation of the Republic (1923) and the Caliphate transferred to Parliament (1924), which was actually dissolved in effect. In little more than a decade, between 1924 and 1937, radical reforms of the Republic were enforced with fundamental interventions into the society. The Islamic schools were abrogated (1924), the Sufi lodges and tombs of Islamic saints that acted as key places of religious social organization were closed (1925), azan (Muslim call for prayer) was banned in its Arabic form (1932), and as the Western hat was enforced (1924), the Islamic apparel was prohibited (1934)<sup>203</sup>. With these interventions, civil manifestations of Islam were restricted in the public space which hindered the representation of conservative values.

The reforms introduced deep and broad enforcement as well as prohibitions in administrative and legal realms. In the absence of social and economic dynamics, the modern (Western) nation of Turkey would be carved by the state which was determined to cut off ties with the Ottoman past that shaped the identity and social behaviour. The civilizational transformation was envisaged in the magnetic field of the West whose supremacy was undisputedly accepted by the ruling elite. As the reforms disregarded popular choices and

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<sup>203</sup>Kuru Ahmet. T, *Secularism and State Policies towards Religion: The United States, France and Turkey*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2009, p. 222.

preferences, there was no significant public demand or support to implement them. In other words, the desired change did not originate from the existing social reality.<sup>204</sup> Therefore, it had to be enforced in a process that required comprehensive securitization which can be summarized as “restrictions of access” in three fields: *knowledge*, *national identity* and *public space*.

### a. Access to Knowledge

The Republic prioritized establishing control over creation and dissemination of knowledge to accelerate its program. In 1924, the Parliament passed a law named “The Unification of Education”<sup>205</sup> that brought all educational institutions under the ministry of education and closed 479 *medreses* that were providing Islamic education in the traditional system. Before this law, there were medreses, secular schools (majority of which were foreign missionary schools), and *mekteps* that provided a low level of education to common people. ZiyaGökalp, a leading theoretician of Turkish nationalism, reflected on this less-than-orderly situation as follows: “One portion of our nation is living in an ancient, another in a medieval, and a third in a modern age. How can the life of a nation be normal with such a threefold life? How can we be a real nation without unifying this threefold education?”<sup>206</sup> Reflections of Gökalp underline the frustration of the new regime with the non-homogenous education and promote the secular school one framing it as modern. The law on unification of education opened one Theology Department at *Darülfünun* (later, Istanbul University) and 29 Imam-Hatip schools to keep the Islamic narrative in line with the preferences of the new regime and provide religious services under state control. Three years after the inception of the law, the Kemalists turned more restrictive about religious instruction and removed it from the curricula of school system altogether.<sup>207</sup> Going further, “They closed down all Imam-Hatip schools in 1930 and the department of theology at Darülfünun in 1933. From that time until 1949, there was no legal education of Islam in Turkey except for a few Qur’an courses.”<sup>208</sup> All in all from the foundation of Republic to the beginning of the multi-party system (1950) the state monopolized religious education and then incriminated it effectively, other than brief

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<sup>204</sup>İpekçi İsmail. C., *Türkiye’de Geri Kalmışlığın Tarihi*, İstanbul, İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2007, p. 246.

<sup>205</sup>See the documentation of the legislation on the web site of Turkish Parliament: <https://www.mevzuat.gov.tr/MevzuatMetin/1.3.430.pdf>. The law transfers the schools, which were previously ruled by the Ministry of Sharia and Foundations, to Ministry of Education.

<sup>206</sup>Quoted by Frey Frederick W. “Education: Turkey”, Robert E. Ward and Dankwart A. Rustow (Eds), *Political Modernization in Japan and Turkey*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1964, p. 209.

<sup>207</sup>Özdalga Elizabeth, “Education in the Name of ‘Order and Progress’: Reflections on the Recent Eight Year Obligatory School Reform in Turkey.” *Muslim World*, vol. 89, no. (3-4), p. 414-438.

<sup>208</sup>Kuru Ahmet T. (2009), *ibid.*, p. 218.

exceptional periods. In other words, access to Islamic knowledge was recriminated, therefore confined to practices of verbal culture in this period.

An acute practice of securitization came in March 1925. In response to a large scale religiously fuelled Kurdish revolt in South-eastern Turkey, the Parliament passed The Law on Maintenance of Order (Takrir-i Sükun Kanunu), which equipped the cabinet with extraordinary powers. With its vague boundaries the first article of the Law<sup>209</sup> stipulated that government was authorized to ban any attempt, organization, promotion or publication in the nature of religious reactionaries or against public order. Using this sweeping authority, the government did not only quell the revolt but also silenced the criticism against the government by shutting down all the oppositional press and trying many media members at excessively authorized Independence Tribunals. With the pretext that some figures of the only opposition party, Progressive Republican Party (*Terakkiperver Cumhuriyet Fırkası*, founded half a year ago) were involved in the revolt, it was shut down. Mustafa Kemal denied the claims of oppression that came with this law in his famous Parliamentary address (*Nutuk*) and reiterated that the law was passed and implemented for the purposes of public security and order and survival and independence of the state.<sup>210</sup> He also claimed that his leadership only aimed at destroying the idea of oppression. However, Takrir-iSükun suppressed the non-violent opposition alongside the violent one effectively, and in 4 years of its implementation, 7500 people were arrested, 660 of whom were executed<sup>211</sup>. The young Republic used the RSAs in its control to silence the oppositional voices and monopolize the access to knowledge through shutting down and silencing the alternative venues. Upon this, it has been able to utilize its ISAs, like the school system and state controlled media more effectively.

### **b. Access to National Identity**

The new Republic came with an agenda that required deep and broad interventions into the society. Established in the magnetic field of Western universalism, the nation would be based on an idiosyncratic form of secularism which would have a negating control on Islam and tradition, the things that represent backwardness. Yet, there was no consensus on the nature and boundaries of Turkishness even among the bureaucratic and intellectual elite. Different perspectives were competing for dominance with different takes on the role of

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<sup>209</sup>See all three articles of the Law on the website of the Turkish Parliament: [https://www.tbmm.gov.tr/tutanaklar/KANUNLAR\\_KARARLAR/kanuntbmmc003/kanuntbmmc003/kanuntbmmc00300578.pdf](https://www.tbmm.gov.tr/tutanaklar/KANUNLAR_KARARLAR/kanuntbmmc003/kanuntbmmc003/kanuntbmmc00300578.pdf)

<sup>210</sup>See for details: <http://www.ataturk.net/cumh/tkr.html>

<sup>211</sup>Zürcher(2004), p. 222.

ethnicity and religion. On the axis of Turkish nationalism, there were fundamentally different and irreconcilable roles attributed to Islam.

Kemalism, for instance, constituted the secularist camp of nationalism and carried elements from *universalism* in its understanding of secularism and *particularism* in its understanding of nationalism. Centre of gravity was constituted by a perspective of progress through science and reason. Being the hegemonic perspective during Atatürk's reign, as the founding President of Turkey (1923-1938), it marked the formative period of official ideology of Turkey through the dominance of an assertive secularism<sup>212</sup> which confined the religions to two places both outside the public space; the conscience of the individuals and confines of the temples. Being treated as a private matter, religion was downplayed by the Kemalist elite as an archaic element of human organization. For the Kemalists, nationalism had a secondary prominence as it was only complementary<sup>213</sup> to secularism. As it has been the case Turkish secularism would be criticized by different segments of the society in the following decades. While liberal democrats would find it excessively interventionist, the Alawis would complain about its exclusive practices that favoured Sunni Muslims and the Sunni Muslims argued that Turkish secularism has been restrictive and prohibitionist towards their religious practices.<sup>214</sup>

A statement of Falih Rıfık Atay, the chief columnist of *Ulus* daily which was the press organ of Atatürk's Republican People's Party (CHP), explicates the difference between the Kemalists (secular nationalists) and pro-Islamic ones: "We preferred the term 'Kemalist' to the term 'nationalist.' There is a reason for this: Kemalist means Westernist, secular and republican nationalist. Mere nationalist means conservative and traditionalist... Kemalism frees Turkish nationalism from the material and moral institutions, customs and traditions which are contrary to Westernism, secularism and republicanism."<sup>215</sup> Yet, the Republican history indicated that Kemalism prevented debates on its version of modernization and therefore downsized to potential of an inclusive social contract as it banished the manifestation of different identities and practices in public space. Furthermore, as a project of modernization, it aims at an overall transformation of the society through socio-political

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<sup>212</sup>Kuru Ahmet T., (2009), *ibid.*, p. 226.

<sup>213</sup>Kuru Ahmet T., (2009), *ibid.*, p. 220.

<sup>214</sup>Akgönül Samim (2011), *ibid.*, p. 46.

<sup>215</sup>Quoted by Çetinsaya Gökhan, in "Rethinking Nationalism and Islam: Some Preliminary Notes on the Roots of Turkish-Islamic Synthesis in Modern Turkish Political Thought", *Muslim World*, vol 89, no. (3-4), p. 350-376.

engineering.<sup>216</sup> With such a mindset, any significant divergence from its worldview and way of life has been securitized by the Kemalist elite.

The ideas of Ziya Gökalp, a pioneer of Turkish nationalism, constituted a representative pro-Islamic envisage of Turkish nationalism. Gökalp builds his perspective of nationhood on three columns; Turkification, Islamization, modernization. He proposes a “modern Islamic Turkishness”<sup>217</sup> which accommodated non-Sunni Alawis and non-Turkish Kurds as the largest sectarian and ethnic groups other than Sunni Turkish majority of the country, yet they have never been fully incorporated into the main body of the nation. The non-Muslims were regarded as *unassimilable* in line with the Ottoman heritage of societal boundaries that were designated via religious identity.<sup>218</sup> In this rather synthetic paradigm, Gökalp defends the reconcilability of modernization in the Western style with Islamic values because of his understanding of universalist Westernization. Unlike Kemalists, for Gökalp, the only universal thing that the West represented was science; therefore, he differentiated the (national) culture from (universal) civilisation.

Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founding president of Turkish Republic, offered a unifying definition: “The people who founded Turkish Republic are called the Turkish nation”. The definition is political and territorial, and it bears no exclusionary implications in ethnic, religious or otherwise terms. Yet, the following utterance of him seems to be spoken from a different perspective: “Nation is a social and political community that is bound by unity of language, culture and ideal to each other.” In line with the spirit of the time, Atatürk seems to have an agenda to melt ethnic, cultural and linguistic differences in the identity of Turkishness that is envisaged by his leadership.

Coming from the secularist tradition, Atatürk attributed an essential position to secularism in his thought, *while religion (Islam) was contingent upon his administrative needs*, such as a means of mobilization or legitimacy. In line with this perspective, the dominant bureaucratic bloc, who was predominantly Kemalists, distanced themselves from Gökalp’s synthetic coexistence of Turkish culture (and a deep accommodation of tradition) with Western civilisation.<sup>219</sup> The major preferences (identity) of the state were formed on the basis of assertive secularism, which aims to “exclude religions from public sphere and confine

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<sup>216</sup> Yavuz Hakan M., “Five stages of the construction of Kurdish nationalism in Turkey”, *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, vol. 7, no. 3, 2001, p. 1-24.

<sup>217</sup> Gökalp Ziya, *Türkleşmek İslamlaşmak Muasırlaşmak*, Ankara, Akçağ Yayınları, 2010, p. 17.

<sup>218</sup> Akgönül Samim (2011), *ibid.*, p. 127.

<sup>219</sup> Berkes Niyazi, *The Development of Secularism in Turkey*, New York, Routledge, 1998, p. 468.



them to private domain”<sup>220</sup>. Considering that an overwhelming majority of the members of Republican bureaucracy was passed on from late Ottoman times, it gets clear how deepinroads the secularist thought had made among the educated population of the Empire and what kind of continuity were the Republican reforms built on.

In ethnic terms, accommodation of non-Turkish groups was dropped altogether by the new state elite. İsmet İnönü, the second most important person in these elite as Atatürk’s right hand expressed this clearly in 1925: “we are frankly nationalists... and nationalism is our only factor of cohesion. In the face of a Turkish majority other elements have no kind of influence. We must Turkify the inhabitants of our land at any price, and we will annihilate those who oppose the Turks or ‘*le turquisme*.’”<sup>221</sup>This harsh assimilationism has not often times been as antagonistic as İnönü stated yet it has been essentially discriminatory towards any group or individual who do not identify themselves as Turks. In other words, it has always been possible to cultivate oneself as a Turk with the cost of leaving your ethnic-linguistic heritage behind.

Secular nationalism, the founding ideology, was in clear contradiction with societal facts of Turkey and created a *double-front exclusion mechanism* in the formative period of Turkish Republic. Because of *ethnic* and *religious* discrimination (which incorporates a call for assimilation), non-Turkish ethnicities, non-Muslim groups and non-secular Muslims did not have equal access to national identity with their own cultural, linguistic and religious heritage, that is to say, unless they agree to assimilate into what they have not been.

### **c. Access and Representation in Public Space**

Public sphere, as a physical and virtual venue of public debate, that is accessible to everyone willing to conduct robust rational deliberation, and is protected from the forceful encroachment of power holders (*i.e.* state), has never fully formed in Turkey. As explained above, the production and dissemination of –officially recognized- knowledge was put under state monopoly and the citizens were envisaged mostly as the subjects of its consumption. “In Turkish public usage, public space (*kamusal alan*) is generally interpreted as an area directly or indirectly related to the state, as observed in statements or reports by politicians, bureaucrats, and the mass media.”<sup>222</sup>

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<sup>220</sup>Kuru Ahmet T., (2009), *ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>221</sup>Şimşir Bilal, *İngiliz Belgeleriyle Türkiye’de Kürt Sorunu: (1924-1938)*, Ankara, Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, 1991, p. 58.

The *double front exclusion mechanism* that is directed against Kurds and conservative Muslims in the identity construction of the Republic manifested itself heavily on the public spaces. In the scope of homogenous nation building efforts, "...the young republic's constitution, state officials and even the courts denied the Kurdish ethnic identity, and the new state's policy toward the Kurds was based on denial of their language, culture, history, and continued with a systematic forced assimilation campaign through prohibiting the Kurdish language..."<sup>223</sup> For the official discourse of the state, which accepted no rival in filling the public space, the Kurds were of ethnic Turkish origin<sup>224</sup>. They were called by the ruling bloc as the Mountain Turks, with an undertone of savagery and backwardness. Mahmut Esat Bozkurt, minister of economy and justice consecutively (1922-1930) in the formative years of the Republic, underlined the ethnic exclusion of the new regime in a rather radical statement: "The Turks are the sole owners and masters of this country. Those who are not pure Turks, have only one right in this country: The right to be servants and slaves of Turks."<sup>225</sup> These statements do not have a representative value in terms of the general approach of the young Republic, yet, it exhibits the degree of accommodation that the new regime had in ethnic exclusion.

The biggest *technology* of ethnic exclusion came with the language ban. In the initial decades, there was no official ban on speaking any other language than Turkish, yet an organized group of students that are sponsored and supported by the government started exercising pressure on language usage other than Turkish, implicitly referring to religious minorities such as; Greeks, Armenians and Jews<sup>226</sup>. The legal prohibition came in 1967 and that banned importing any material written or recorded in Kurdish. Another legal regulation which was made in 1983<sup>227</sup> declared that Turkish is the native language for all Turkish citizens and the ideas can only be expressed, spread and published in Turkish. Language ban created a huge exclusionary vehicle towards the full representation of Kurds in the public

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<sup>222</sup>Hazama Yasushi, "The Making of a State-Centered Public Sphere in Turkey: A Discourse Analysis", *Turkish Studies*, 2014, vol.15, no.2, p. 163-180.

<sup>223</sup>Sagnic Ceng, "Mountain Turks: State ideology and the Kurds in Turkey", *Information, Society and Justice*, Vol. 3 no. 2, 2010, p 127-134.

<sup>224</sup>Natali Denis, *The Kurds and the State: Evolving National Identity in Iraq, Turkey and Iran*, New York, Syracuse University Press, 2005, p. 78.

<sup>225</sup>See the details of Turkish Parliament's general assembly:

[https://www.tbmm.gov.tr/develop/owa/tutanak\\_g.birlesim\\_baslangic?P4=21866&P5=H&page1=30&page2=30](https://www.tbmm.gov.tr/develop/owa/tutanak_g.birlesim_baslangic?P4=21866&P5=H&page1=30&page2=30)

<sup>226</sup>See for details: [http://www.rifatbali.com/images/stories/dokumanlar/turkce\\_konusma\\_birgun.pdf](http://www.rifatbali.com/images/stories/dokumanlar/turkce_konusma_birgun.pdf)

<sup>227</sup>See the minutes of The Law on Publications about Languages Other than Turkish (Law no. 2932). Turkish Parliamentary records: [https://www.tbmm.gov.tr/tutanaklar/KANUNLAR\\_KARARLAR/kanuntbmmc066/kanundmc066/kanundmc06602932.pdf](https://www.tbmm.gov.tr/tutanaklar/KANUNLAR_KARARLAR/kanuntbmmc066/kanundmc066/kanundmc06602932.pdf)

space. As the other non-Turkish ethnic groups are much smaller than Kurds in population, they embraced Turkish as the official language in an easier fashion.

The secularism of Turkish Republic, *laiklik* (adapted from French word *laicite*), manifested itself as “negating control of religion” in the public space and therefore, exhibited little tolerance on the appearance of religion in the public space. However, secularization was enforced by the state rather than being a social process that took place through civilian dynamics, therefore it repressed religious identities of Muslims and non-Muslims alike and was not welcome by neither of them other than already secularized sub-groups. As for non-Muslims, they had to give up the autonomy that they had pertaining to civic matters during the Ottoman centuries with the introduction of an adopted version of Swiss Civil Code.<sup>228</sup> “Overtly religiously observant people were not accepted into the political, social, or intellectual elite circles. The republic marginalized them, caricaturized them as fanatics, and considered them uncivilized. It was these marginalized groups that later formed the backbone of political Islam.”<sup>229</sup>

The closure of Sufi lodges and tombs of Islamic saints hindered the only existing civic Islamic organization other than mosques, and blockaded the right to assembly. “These measures met with stubborn resistance from the population. *Tekkes* and *türbes* played an important role in everyday Muslim life and the hat was considered a symbol of Christian Europe.”<sup>230</sup> The ban on religious attire denied full representation of the values that the attire carried with all their connotations. As the mosques were controlled by Directorate of Religious Affairs and all the schools that provided Islamic education were state schools whose curricula are determined by the public authorities, all the venues of religious manifestation, spanning from the very production of knowledge, to the performance of religious prayers, were brought under state control. The exclusion of all other interpretations of Islam and their social practice from public life stands as a significant securitization of religious freedom.

However, the reforms had a limited penetration in rural areas, where Islamic education was provided by *tariqas* and knowledgeable individuals in less-than-official means.<sup>231</sup> Excessive intervention and comprehensive control of state on religious sphere and restrictions

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<sup>228</sup> Akgönül Samim, “Türkiye’de Sünni Olmayan Azınlıklar ve Laiklik”, Akgönül Samim (ed.), *Tartışılan Laiklik: Fransa ve Türkiye’de İlkeler ve Algılamalar*, Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, İstanbul, 2011, p. 177-178.

<sup>229</sup> Toprak Binnaz, “Secularism and Islam: The Building of Modern Turkey”, *Macalester International*, Vol. 15. (2005), pp. 27-43.

<sup>230</sup> Zürcher Eric (2004), *ibid.*, p. 173.

<sup>231</sup> Mardin Şerif (2011), *ibid.*, p. 70.

brought upon religious thought and practice turned these tariqas and (later) Islamic communities into safe havens for conservative masses and acted as venues as political and pre-political sentiments of opposition to the major claims of the new regime.<sup>232</sup> With the advent of multi-party regime (1950), the rural areas which resisted the restrictive and prohibitionist *laiklik* of Republican reforms would become the breeding grounds of the peripheral mass politics. Due to its “flaky” and superficial nature, Kemalism has failed to understand how deep the space-time perception of Islam rooted in the society and therefore it has not been able to offer prominent alternatives to existing Islamic norms in quotidian terms.<sup>233</sup>

### **1.2.3. Multi-Party Period: *Securitization during the Maintenance***

Turkey's transition into democracy took place in a rather uneventful process, which is interesting considering the self imposed duties of the regime in terms of creating a nation and civilizing its citizens. By the end of WWII there was a serious discontent against the government among the rural populations that constituted about 80% of the whole population. Their living standards had not increased significantly despite all the official rhetoric about modernization. Less than 0.025% of the villages had electricity, yet the coercive and extractive elements of the state, the tax collector and gendarmerie had become more visible in an oppressive manner. The secularist policies had weakened the ties of the state with the masses and crippled the legitimacy of its policies.<sup>234</sup> Excessive taxation on the agricultural products and a new law that was heavily promoted by the CHP elite on redistribution of land created frustration on large land owners as well as small farmers. At the international level, the victory of Allies in WWII and the incumbent American hegemony levelled the political landscape towards West. The Marshall Plan that provided immense financial aid for the rebuilding of Western Europe and the Truman Doctrine that offered military aid for “free nations” (Greece and Turkey) provided external incentives for Turkey's entry into Western bloc. All things considered, the domestic and external conditions facilitated Turkey's transition into democracy, that is to say, the multi-party system.

The highest authority figure of the time, President İsmet İnönü, mentioned that it was the time for a more established democracy for Turkey as the WWII ended and harsh security

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<sup>232</sup>Yavuz Hakan, “A Preamble to the Kurdish Question: the Politics of Kurdish Identity”, *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, vol. 18, no. 1, 1998, p. 9-18.

<sup>233</sup>Mardin Şerif (2011), *ibid.*, p. 161.

<sup>234</sup>Zürcher Eric (2004), *ibid.*, p. 206-207.

measures were not needed anymore.<sup>235</sup> In consistency with that, he declared another time that Turkey would side with the West in the newly forming East-West divide of the Cold War and stated: “The only thing that missing in our system is an opposition party”<sup>236</sup>. In 1946 the intra-party opposition of CHP parted ways and established the Democrat Party (DP). In 1950, the first secret ballot elections were held in which DP won 53% of the votes and got into the government in the first democratic and multi party elections of Turkish history<sup>237</sup>. With the advent of DP, the conservative masses obtained a venue for their expression and started transitioning from pre-political to fully political.

Capital-friendly policies of DP created a more conducive environment for individual enterprise and competition based market. Together with decrease in taxation and import of cheap machinery this new environment brought about a relative prosperity, which brought the support of the rural populations that constituted an overwhelming majority of society for the DP. Yet the privileged classes that are promoted by the DP got involved in the practices of nepotism and unearned income through their political network and this triggered discontent among DP’s voters.<sup>238</sup> Despite the fact that it was the Democrats who passed a Press Law in the Parliament that promoted freedom of thought and expression in the first year of their rule, it was again them who started punishing the press organs for their broadcast, shutting them down, applying censorship and broadly prosecuting journalists a few years later. Freedom oriented policies on press had been taken upside down by the same people who initiated them in the first place. Towards the end of DP’s third term (1957-1960) devaluation of Turkish Lira and overall deterioration of economic situation in the country brought about a more oppressive DP on press. Towards the end of 1959, as it got weaker, the tolerance that Democrats had for the opposition and expression of dissent hit the bottom. The leader of an opposition party, Osman Bölükbaşı was imprisoned alongside leading journalists with oppositional conviction. Dailies that are critical towards the DP, such as; Ulus, Akis, Dünya, Kim, Vatan, Demokrat İzmir, Forum, Cumhuriyet, Yeni Sabah and Akşam were shut down for various amounts of time.<sup>239</sup>

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<sup>235</sup>Gedikli Berber Ş., “Türkiye’de Çok Partili Hayata Geçiş Sürecinde Sivil Hükümet Darbesi: CHP’de 35’ler Vakası”, *Akademik Bakış*, Vol. 6, no.11, 2012, p. 136-137.

<sup>236</sup>Tunaya Tarık Z., *Türkiye’de Siyasi Partiler*, İstanbul, İletişim Yayınları, 2015, p. 466, 467.

<sup>237</sup>See for an analysis of 1950 elections, <https://www.setav.org/turkiye-demokrasisi-baglaminda-14-mayis-1950-secimlerinin-anlami/>

<sup>238</sup>Karpat Kemal, *Osmanlıdan Günümüze Kimlik ve İdeoloji*, İstanbul, TimaşYayınları, 2014, p. 120-122.

<sup>239</sup>Yıldız Nuran, “Demokrat Parti İktidarı ve Basın”, Conference Proceeding, Ankara University’s Institute of Social Sciences, January 1996, available at: <http://dergiler.ankara.edu.tr/dergiler/42/476/5543.pdf>, last accessed on April 2, 2019.

#### **1.2.4. Military Coups: *Retooling of Bureaucratic Tutelage***

As Turkey transitioned into democracy, the secularist core lost its monopoly on the public space and the religious practices that were previously banned or pushed to periphery were partly de-securitized by the DP governments. Losing the totalitarian control on the state machinery forced the secularist establishment to obtain new habits and instruments, that is to say, to *re-habituate* and *retool* through high bureaucracy over which they still maintained control. Losing consecutive elections to conservatives, the secularist bureaucracy (establishment) started exercising tutelary control over civilian politics. AKP was established on such a social memory of multiple decades and utilized it to the best of its interests in both reformist and authoritarian periods. This exclusionary military tutelage would also serve as the driving engine of “anti-establishment” sentiments for conservative masses and Islamists.

Furthermore, these military interventions, especially the ones took place in 1960 and 1997 provided the *necessary trauma* for the identity making of the AKP. Identifying the Party on the legacy of Adnan Menderes, who was executed by the military-controlled judiciary of the junta regime after the 1960 coup, Erdoğan has built his own anti-establishment stance on this legacy and rallied the conservatives who felt victimized by the secularist establishment around his leadership. Considering the constitutive role this anti-coup discourse plays in Erdoğan’s narrative of democracy, it becomes clear how crucial these interventions were in the making of AKP’s identity and discourse. By many people, that is, from international analysts to regular voters in Turkey, this anti-coup narrative is taken as essence of a democratic stance on behalf of the AKP against the biggest antagonist of democracy in the country. Furthermore, at the systemic level, they indicate the survival efforts of the secularist establishment through securitizing the civilian politics that came in retooling and re-habitation. Therefore, the military interventions of Turkey deserve an overall examination for the purposes of this thesis.

##### **1.2.4.1. 1960 Coup: *Beginning of Retooling and Re-habitation***

Oppression of the DP was not limited to press. In 1960 the Party established an Investigation Commission in the Turkish Parliament, all of whose members were DP deputies, to investigate the “armed and organized revolt preparations of the CHP and the role of press in this endeavour”<sup>240</sup>. No evidence was presented to the commission for such an

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<sup>240</sup>Öngel Alpaslan, “Demokrat Parti Dönemi Basın ve İktidar İlişkileri”, (Government’s Relations With Media During Democrat Party Reign) is a master’s thesis available at Istanbul Ticaret University’s Institute of Social Sciences, 2017. <http://acikerisim.ticaret.edu.tr/xmlui/bitstream/handle/11467/2203/71241.pdf?>

organized effort and the Commission was established to suppress the opposition without political legitimacy. Oppressive policies of DP on CHP and media (as mentioned above) triggered formation of juntas in the Turkish Armed Forces (TAF). On May 27, 1960, a well organized junta intervened into politics and seized power until November 1961. The coup was justified on the basis of DP's authoritarian policies, widespread corruption, economic failures and its alleged deviation from Atatürk's principles.<sup>241</sup> Prime Minister Adnan Menderes and two members of his cabinet, Fatin Rüştü Zorlu and Hasan Polatkan were executed in September 1961, under the military rule.<sup>242</sup> The intervention of TAF on popular will and shut down of DP have been fully inherited by the AKP as a social memory as Erdoğan identified the political lineage of the party with DP<sup>243</sup> and resembled himself to Menderes<sup>244</sup> in terms of mobilizing masses against secular establishment. The executions and party closure acted as formative trauma for Erdoğan's initial anti-establishment stance.

“The 1960 coup was the first in a series of interventions over the next four decades that steadily assembled a system of indirect military-bureaucratic tutelage over electoral politics.”<sup>245</sup> Yet the army did not militarize the whole political machinery and withdrew in a year. This was consistent with the political heritage that the young Republic inherited from the Ottoman Empire, where the Janissaries (the elite military) sometimes intervened, dethroned sultans and placed someone else from the royal family on top of the state. In other words, the habitus of Turkish military is not about direct rule for sizeable terms but “re-orienting a derailed system”. Re-orienting the system included two basic pillars: *changing the political actors* and *establishing new institutions for the regime to defend itself* as it was constructed. TAF not only considers itself only as the ultimate means of national security and survival of Turkish Republic but also acts as the “guardian of Republican values”, referring to the ones set during the reign of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, briefly; secular Turkish nationalism. So, “even when it returned to barracks, the military retained significant – but never complete – influence over civilian politics. The resultant system was a hybrid regime; a tutelary

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<sup>241</sup>Karpat Kemal (2014), *ibid.*, p. 111-112.

<sup>242</sup>See for details: <https://www.nytimes.com/1961/09/18/archives/menderes-hanged-in-turkish-prison-former-premier-executed-day-after.html>

<sup>243</sup>See for details: [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/the-execution-of-a-former-turkish-leader-that-still-haunts-erdogan/2016/07/29/4772c256-54b4-11e6-994c-4e3140414f34\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/the-execution-of-a-former-turkish-leader-that-still-haunts-erdogan/2016/07/29/4772c256-54b4-11e6-994c-4e3140414f34_story.html)

<sup>244</sup>Yavuz Hakan M., *Islamic Political Identity in Turkey*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2005, p. 258.

<sup>245</sup>Akkoyunlu Karabekir, “Electoral Integrity in Turkey: From Tutelary Democracy to Competitive Authoritarianism”, BaşerBahar, Öztürk Erdi A. (Eds), *Authoritarian Politics in Turkey: Elections, Resistance and The AKP*, London, 2017, I. B. Tauris, p. 49.

democracy where real and meaningful popular contestation of power took place under the vigilant gaze of the guardians”<sup>246</sup>.

The TAF, then, embraced a new and rather *political* behaviour with 1960 coup. During the single-party rule, there was no need to intervene as they shared the same mindset with the CHP of the time, yet, with 1960 coup, the TAF had *re-habituated* itself to defend the “Republic and its values”. This defence included “correction” of public will as well. TAF had become the guardian of the secular establishment and its socio-political preferences. Article 35 of the Military Code that was enacted under the military rule in 1961 defined the role of military as, “protecting the country of Turks and Turkish Republic identified by the Constitution”. Designating TAF as the “ultimate guard” for Turkish Republic not only from without the country but also from within, this article was used as an anchorage for the justification of direct and indirect interventions of TAF into civilian politics. The article was amended in 2013 and limited the role of TAF as a guard against external threats<sup>247</sup> which only happened after the AKP disarticulated the secularist establishment within TAF.

In 1961, a constituent assembly with civilian and military members made the Second Constitution of the Republic. The president of the assembly was an army general, so it would be fair to claim that the Constitution was made under military influence. However, the 1961 Constitution expanded the sphere of basic rights and freedoms. For example, it secured the right to assembly and protest without prior permission of public authorities, and made the governmental restrictions more difficult and rendered them subject to judicial oversight<sup>248</sup>. The bicameral system established by the Constitution removed the voting authority of the President on the Constitutional amendments made by Parliament<sup>249</sup>. As the radio and television broadcast, which used to be done by state only, was defined as autonomous and non-partisan, the universities were given a significant amount of self rule<sup>250</sup>.

Alongside all these liberal leaning regulations, the 1961 Constitution established the Constitutional Court, for the oversight of the compliance of the legislation with the text and spirit of the Constitution. Regardless of the foundational intention, the Constitutional Court

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<sup>246</sup>Akkoyunlu Karabekir (2017), *Ibid.*, p. 49.

<sup>247</sup>See for details:

<https://www.cnnturk.com/2013/turkiye/07/13/tsk.ic.hizmet.kanununun.35.maddesi.degisti/715269.0/index.html>

<sup>248</sup>See for a brief comparison of Turkish constitutions:

[http://kampus.beykent.edu.tr/Paylasim/Dosyalar/Anayasalar\\_129807210772392500.pdf](http://kampus.beykent.edu.tr/Paylasim/Dosyalar/Anayasalar_129807210772392500.pdf)

<sup>249</sup>See Article 155: <https://www.tbmm.gov.tr/anayasa/anayasa61.htm>

<sup>250</sup>See Article 119: <https://www.tbmm.gov.tr/anayasa/anayasa61.htm>



would shut down many political parties from socialist, Islamist and pro-Kurdish traditions and turn into a major tool of securitization. In this regard it had liberal tendencies, yet, it created a judicial organ that had oversight on political parties and therefore, it was far from being internally consistent.<sup>251</sup> It would be fair to claim that 1961 Constitution simultaneously had securitizing and de-securitizing effects on the public space. While the checks were placed on abuse of power by government, more space was opened for similar abuses by military and judicial elite on the government. In other words, it limited the government's intervention on the public space (de-securitizing effect) yet it empowered the TAF to intervene into civilian politics and established Constitutional Court with powers to restrict the political playground (securitizing effect).

Turkey returned to "normal politics" with the 1961 elections, which ended up with an unstable coalition government between the CHP and the Justice Party (AP) which can be regarded as a successor of the DP. Süleyman Demirel, a well educated modernist-conservative became the chairman of AP and won the 1965 elections with 52.9 %. Demirel was a non-confrontationalist and had a moderate discourse with a conservative mindset. Yet, in 1969 elections the two major parties of Turkish politics, CHP as centre left and AP as centre right, have lost votes (27,4 % and 46,6 % consecutively) indicating the fact that Turkish voter was in search of something different. Two important parties, National Order Party (MNP, 1970) and Nationalist Movement Party (MHP, 1969) were founded in this context. MNP was the political formation of the National Outlook Movement who employed an Islamist discourse with a heavy emphasis on morality and anti-Western orientation. Nationalist Movement Party evolved from the Republicanist Villager Nation Party which was founded in 1954. Yet, proliferation of "the political" was not the only development in 1960s; towards the end of the decade, a polarization between newly emerging socialism and conservative nationalism started to emerge.<sup>252</sup>

#### **1.2.4.2. 1971 Memorandum: *New Tools for Securitization***

"Turkey found itself in a rather conflicting situation in 1960s. On the one side the old elitist regime (the establishment) was revived with a military tutelage, yet, on the other side, the same tutelary regime accepted the 1961 Constitution that expanded freedoms and political rights."<sup>253</sup> After the coup, the governments did not perform well in terms of economic and

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<sup>251</sup>Karpat Kemal, *Kısa Türkiye Tarihi: 1800-2012*, İstanbul, TimaşYayıncılık, 2015, p. 188.

<sup>252</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 200-201.

<sup>253</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 187.

political stability. After 4 years of inefficient CHP-led coalition governments, the right wing AP won the 1965 elections, but Demirel's AP has not been successful in terms of dealing with polarization, unrest and eventually political violence that swept streets of the country"<sup>254</sup>.

The TAF then regarded this unrest as an invitation to intervene in March, 1971, which didn't come out as direct seize of power. It issued a memorandum for the reasons of widespread civil unrest, ever broadening anarchy, loss of societal peace, straying from Atatürk's ideas and lack of reforms set forth by the Constitution<sup>255</sup>. The memorandum ousted the right wing conservative AP government and was heavily applauded by left wing and socialist organizations<sup>256</sup>. Claiming to restore order, the junta accused the Demirel-led AP government with dragging the country into anarchy and chaos, and demanded a "strong and credible government...inspired by Ataturk's views."<sup>257</sup> Given resignation and military takeover as his choices, Demirel resigned, and an interim government was founded under the leadership of a CHP deputy, which lasted little more than a year<sup>258</sup>. The TAF had acted in chain of command and declared that it had carried out its duty envisaged in Article 35 of the Military Code brought by 1961 Constitution. The Article was effectively used to legitimize TAF's intervention, in other words, it was employed as a Constitutional tool of securitization.

Despite the fact that 1971 intervention did not involve military takeover of political power, it was broader than the direct takeover of 1960 by TAF in terms of consolidation of bureaucratic tutelage. With the Constitutional amendments made after the intervention, the autonomy of radio and television broadcast by state owned TRT and the self-rule of universities were removed. Military High Administrative Courts were established for the judicial proceedings of military personnel, which brought significant evasion from civilian supervision. State Security Courts were established to guard the state against "the threats from *within* the country and without". Perhaps more importantly, restrictions on the exercise of basic rights and freedoms were deepened and broadened.<sup>259</sup> Acquiring new instruments of control, the judicio-military tutelage of Turkey went through a process of significant retooling, and experienced a new wave of securitization with 1971 intervention.

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<sup>254</sup>Cleveland L. William, Bunton Martin, *A History of Modern Middle East*, Colorado, Westview Press, 2009, p. 282.

<sup>255</sup>Karpat Kemal (2015), *ibid.*, p. 204.

<sup>256</sup>See for details: <https://www.dunyabulteni.net/olaylar/12-mart-askeri-muhtirasi-neden-verildi-h150957.html>

<sup>257</sup>See for an overview of Turkish military coups:

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/europe/2012/04/20124472814687973.html>

<sup>258</sup>See for details: <https://www.nytimes.com/1971/03/13/archives/turkish-regime-is-ousted-by-the-military-leaders-no-move-made-to.html>

<sup>259</sup>See for details: [http://kampus.beykent.edu.tr/Paylasim/Dosyalar/Anayasalar\\_129807210772392500.pdf](http://kampus.beykent.edu.tr/Paylasim/Dosyalar/Anayasalar_129807210772392500.pdf)

#### 1.2.4.3. 1980 Coup: “*Restoration of Law and Order*”

Far from the claims of military intervention, 1970s have been far from stability in Turkey as the government has changed 5 times and none of them have been able to get over the social unrest and economic problems. The inflation rates reached up to 44%, 68% and 107% in years 1978, 1979 and 1980<sup>260</sup>. As the overall situation of the system neared total disintegration in late 1970s, “two basic causes of the collapse can be distinguished: firstly, a mounting economic crisis, and secondly, a catastrophic decline in law and order, virtually amounting to a state of civil war.”<sup>261</sup> In the winter of 1978-79 there has been a shortage of fuel and schools and hospitals have been shut down. In the summer of 1980 Turkey had lost its sense of security. “In average 25 people were being killed every day in political clashes between socialists and ultranationalists, which took the shape of ethnic and sectarian conflict at times. To add insult to injury, the major parties, the CHP and AP had lost their ability of bargaining and reconciliation and therefore, failed to elect a President... The governments in this decade had failed in both economic and societal matters and were not able to cultivate a minimum sense of security. All these failures resulted in a huge void of power on behalf of the elected governments.”<sup>262</sup>

There was a widespread perception among the Turkish public that the short-lived coalition governments were failing to exercise control and provide basic security for the citizens of the country. “The public, worn down by the breakdown of law and order, the galloping inflation and shortages of basic goods, the squabbles among the parties and the paralysed parliament, welcomed martial law and the promise of stability it offered.”<sup>263</sup> As of September 1980, the conditions were “ripe” for a military intervention and the TAF intervened, ousted the government, suspended the Constitution and abolished the Parliament. In a press conference organized days after the coup, the top commander of the coup, Kenan Evren justified the intervention with following claims: The coup was conducted to, protect the national unity, provide security for life and property, exercise state authority, create societal peace and establish a national understanding, restart the functioning of the regime as a secular republic that guarantees basic rights and freedoms and eventually when these are established pass the authority on to elected civilians.<sup>264</sup>

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<sup>260</sup>Hale William, *The Political and Economic Development of Modern Turkey*, Abingdon, Taylor and Francis, 1980, p. 162.

<sup>261</sup>Hale William, *Turkish Politics and Military*, London, Routledge, 1994, p. 222.

<sup>262</sup>Karpat Kemal (2015), *ibid.*, p. 208-209.

<sup>263</sup>Ahmad Feroz, *The Making of Modern Turkey*, London, Routledge, 1993, p. 182.

The National Security Council (*Milli Güvenlik Kurulu*, MGK) that was established in the aftermath of the coup with a military majority seized the executive power until 1983. The new Constitution, which came with new tools of securitization, was put to referendum in November 1982 and endorsed by 91% approval rate.<sup>265</sup> In the new Constitution, the MGK would determine the fundamentals of security policies<sup>266</sup> as associations, foundations, chambers and labour unions were placed under the control of central authority. With the establishment of Council of Higher Education (*Yüksek Öğretim Kurulu*, YÖK) the universities which were given autonomy by 1961 Constitution, were put under strict central control.<sup>267</sup> Both of these institutions, YÖK and MGK were overwhelmingly controlled by the secularist establishment as major tools of securitization that is until they were taken over by the AKP in its authoritarian turn. As MGK exercised restrictive control over civilian governments, YÖK controlled the administration of universities and implemented prohibitions that directly affected the students, such as the ban on headscarf that was put into practice after the next military intervention in 1997. Interestingly, AKP would later use the ban on headscarf in its contra-establishment mobilization but would never dissolve or decrease the power of YÖK. On the contrary, the AKP would empower YÖK further and turn it into a means of its own securitization.

The 1980 intervention had deeper societal impact than the previous ones. Labour unions and associations are banned from political activity as strikes and labour agreements were subjected to limitations. 23.700 associations were shut down and the newspapers were banned from publication for about 300 days.<sup>268</sup> In the aftermath of the intervention, 650.000 people were detained, 230.000 of whom were tried in courts of martial law and 517 of them were given death penalty. As of 1990, 52.000 people were still in jail because of the convictions that they got following the coup.<sup>269</sup> Therefore, in terms of the *retooling of the state* and the scale of the intervention, 1980 coup brought deeper and broader securitization.

The coup also disclosed changes in the mindset of the secularist establishment in the form of softening towards public manifestation of Islam. This softening is perceived as a shift

<sup>264</sup>See for the full text of press declaration: <http://www.ankahukuk.com/wiki/evrenin-ilk-basin-toplantisi-16-9-1980/>

<sup>265</sup>See for details of the referendum: <https://www.dunyabulteni.net/tarihten-olaylar/halk-tarafindan-secilen-ilk-cumhurbaskani-kenan-evrenmis-h306119.html>

<sup>266</sup>Burak Begüm, "Osmanlı'dan Günümüze Ordu-Siyaset İlişkileri", *History Studies*, vol. 3, no. 1, 2011, p. 45-67.

<sup>267</sup>Dursun Soner, "Türkiye'nin Güvenlik Algılamasındaki Değişim: 12 Eylül 1980 Askeri Müdahale Sonrası Dönem", *Çağdaş Türkiye Tarihi Araştırmaları Dergisi*, vol. 7, no. 16-17, 2008, p. 421-433.

<sup>268</sup>Boztekin Nihal (Ed), *Türkiye Siyasetinde Ordunun Rolü: Asker-Sivil İlişkileri, Güvenlik Sektörü ve Sivil Denetim*, İstanbul, Heinrich Böll Stiftung Derneği Türkiye Temsilciliği, 2010, p. 58.

<sup>269</sup>For a detailed account, see: <https://t24.com.tr/haber/iste-12-eylul-darbesinin-kanli-bilancosu.296166>

in state ideology toward Turkish Islamic Synthesis<sup>270</sup>, which may be regarded as re-animation of nationalism proposed by Ziya Gökalp at the initial years of the Republic. Ideas that are similar to those of Gökalp were promoted by the semi-conservative Hearth of Luminaries (Aydınlar Ocağı) in 1970s and 1980s, and members of the Hearth were appointed to important positions in state bureaucracy. All in all, “the military’s strategy for legitimizing the Turkish state and securing popular support for it involved a radical departure from the Kemalist secularism that had defined Turkey until then.”<sup>271</sup>

Perhaps, the embrace of Turkish-Islamic Synthesis by the TAF was rather a pragmatic manoeuvre of the secularist establishment to empower the immunity of society against rising radical leftism and shades of socialism than a value-based acceptance of the Synthesis. In support of this opinion, 1997 military intervention would take place as a rejection embrace of the Synthesis with its excessively secularist set of preferences. Yet, regardless of the debate on promotion of Islam by the state, the period between 1980 coup and 1997 military intervention took place in a *toleration* toward Islam in the public space and the political opportunity spaces that the Islamists used in 1990s were the fruits of this toleration. It was in this milieu of relative freedom that the Islamist NOM tradition went through a process of capacity building. In a similar vein, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and other leading figures of the AKP started gaining significance within the NOM tradition in this period.

#### **1.2.4.4. “Post-Modern Coup” of 1997: *Securitization of Islam***

The junta regime of 1980 coup organized elections that were surprisingly democratic in 1983. After all three military coups, “there has been no direct intervention into the elections or their results by tutelary actors: Reasonably free and fair elections constituted a central pillar of the Turkish hybrid system, serving a legitimizing function not only for elected governments but also for the tutelary actors, who typically justified their interventions as unfortunate but necessary acts to preserve and “restore democracy”, in the wake of abuses by self-serving, unpatriotic and inept politicians.”<sup>272</sup> The tutelary actors were not necessarily interested in determining the civilian government; their concern was more about drawing boundaries for them, specifically on the issues that they regard threats to national security.

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<sup>270</sup>See a thorough analysis of the issue by Behlül Özkan: <https://www.hudson.org/research/13807-the-cold-war-era-origins-of-islamism-in-turkey-and-its-rise-to-power>

<sup>271</sup>Eligür Banu, *The Mobilization of Political Islam in Turkey*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2010, p. 85.

<sup>272</sup>Akkoyunlu Karabekir (2017), *ibid.*, p. 50.

The Motherland Party (*AnavatanPartisi*, ANAP) of Turgut Özal, which was founded in the election year of 1983, won the elections with 45%. Özal was a culturally conservative economically liberal pragmatist centre-right politician. In harmony with the preferences of the military regime, Özal emphasized the importance of economic performance and facilitated the emergence of a Turkish *homo economicus* which would facilitate the emergence of the AKP through creating a conservative entrepreneurial class two decades later.<sup>273</sup> Despite his electoral success and economic performance after the military regime, Özal has not been able to dominate the Turkish political landscape for a long time. In 1989, he has become the President of the country, a rather symbolic position back then, and ANAP has lost popularity and then government in the first elections in 1991.

By early 1990s, Turkey entered a decade of economic and political instability, which created huge voids in the economy-politics of the country. The contestation between two centre-right parties, ANAP and True Path Party (*DoğruYolPartisi*, DYP) ended without a decisive winner yet with great frustration in terms of leadership and effective governing on their electorate. Since “Islam-as-culture is the most important icon of its claim to be ‘modern’ the centre right simultaneously opposes both politicized Islam and radicalized secularism”<sup>274</sup>. As ANAP and DYP were perceived as the main reasons of lack of stability, the Welfare Party (*RefahPartisi*, RP) from the Islamist NOM tradition came to the fore and won two largest cities; Istanbul and Ankara alongside many others in 1994 local elections. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan won Istanbul only with 25.2 % as well as Ankara being won by another RP candidate with no more than 27.3 %<sup>275</sup>. The unfruitful competition between the two right wing parties and their rather weak performance had opened a vast opportunity space for the Islamists. Using the momentum of 1994 elections and utilizing the fragmentation of centre right, the RP elevated itself to be the winning party of 1995 general elections with 21.4%<sup>276</sup>. In 1996, RP formed a coalition government with DYP and for the first time, an Islamist politician obtained the post of Prime Minister in Republican history.

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<sup>273</sup>Karpat Kemal (2015), *ibid.*, p. 224-225.

<sup>274</sup>Cizre Ü., Çınar M., “Turkey 2002: Kemalism, Islamism, and Politics in the Light of the February 28 Process”, *South Atlantic Quarterly*, vol. 102, no.2-3, 2003, p. 314.

<sup>275</sup>See for details of the election results:

<http://www.ysk.gov.tr/doc/dosyalar/docs/Mahalli/1994/Buyuksehir/Pdf/1994Mahalli-Buyuksehir-Ankara.pdf>

<sup>276</sup>In this election, ANAP and DYP, two centre right parties obtained 19.6% and 19.2% respectively. There was a leadership change in both parties and the new leaders failed to maintain the momentum that the parties previously had. After the elections they formed a coalition government which lasted less than four months; another indicator of the dissolution in the center right. See for details: <http://www.ysk.gov.tr/tr/1983-2007-yillari-arasi-milletvekili-genel-secimleri/3008>

Realizing the controlling capacity of the state, the RP set out to use it for Islamist ends rather than dealing with the economic issues and the problems the exercise of basic rights and freedoms.<sup>277</sup>Failing to recognize and rejecting to accept the diverse nature of Turkish society, the RP started using a polarizing and exclusionary discourse. In a parliamentary speech, Necmettin Erbakan, the chairman of RP mentioned the election slogan of his party, “Just Order”, in a rather unsettling way; “The Just Order will be established. The question here is whether the transition will be soft of hard, bloody or not”<sup>278</sup> The top generals of TAF were be deeply disturbed by that.<sup>279</sup>Expressions of Erbakan were perceived as a threat to public order and the secular settings of the Republic by them.

When a municipal mayor from RP in the district of Sincan of capitol Ankara organized an event, ‘Jerusalem Night’, and invited the ambassador of Iran and many other representatives from Middle Eastern countries,tanks hit to the streets to demonstrate the displeasure of TAF and give a clear message to Erbakan government.<sup>280</sup>In response Erbakan doubled down and invited the leaders of Islamic communities and tarikatsfor an iftar dinner to the office of Prime Ministry, in the fashion of a religious ceremony. This was the last straw for the secularly sensitive TAF, who had recently defined religious reactionarism (*irtica* in Turkish) as a major threat to national security of Turkey at the scale of Kurdish secessionism.<sup>281</sup>The TAF then used National Security Council (MGK) as its pressure tool on the civilian government and intervened to civilian politics with a memorandum on February 28, 1997. Similar to 1971 intervention, the TAF forced the popularly elected government to step down without physically intervening and disbanding the government.After a couple months of resistance, the government led by Erbakan stepped down in June, 1997 and eventually his party, RP, was shut down by Constitutional Court with the accusation that “it had become the focal point of anti-secular activities”<sup>282</sup>.

The memorandum declared by MGK included clear warnings not only against the Islamist RP-led government but also against the social groups that were labelled within the

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<sup>277</sup>Duran Burhanettin, Çınar Menderes (2008) *ibid.*,p. 30.

<sup>278</sup>See Erbakan’s speech on internet: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C2OtlcBtVeM>

<sup>279</sup>See the interview conducted with the then chief of general staff, İsmail HakkıKaradayı on, <https://t24.com.tr/haber/erbakan-kanli-mi-olacak-kansiz-mi-dediginde-korktuk,208463>

<sup>280</sup>See for details of the demonstration of tanks and the defence of the commander who gave the order: <https://www.milligazete.com.tr/haber/1503817/28-subatta-sincanda-tanklari-yuruten-ceylanoglu-tanklar-tatbikat-icin-sincanda-yurutuldu>

<sup>281</sup>See for the details of the internal debates of the upper echelons of TAF on irtica and the politics of the military intervention in 1997: <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/tarikat-iftari-bardagi-tasirdi-39260952>

<sup>282</sup>See for the details of RP’s closure: <https://www.milliyet.com.tr/siyaset/refah-partisi-de-ayni-gerekcelerle-kapatildi-505586>

framework of religious reactionarism. The warnings of 18-article memorandum spanned from the financial activities of religious groups to the radio and television channels run by them in an effort to “protect” the secular nature of Turkish state.<sup>283</sup> Again, the memorandum restricted the manifestations of Islam in the public and political space, and recommended shutting down Sufi lodges and limiting religious education, with a reference to Republican reforms conducted in 1920s and 30s, that is, the Golden Age of Kemalism.

The secularist preferences and restrictive attitude of the intervention towards Islamic manifestations in the public space alienated conservative masses. The widespread sentiment among them was that they were defined as threat to national security, that is to say, once again they were being pushed to periphery. In the policies enforced by the TAF, efforts of restructuring a radical version of secularism were visible: “All primary and secondary school curricula were altered so as to emphasize both the secularist history and character of the republic and the new security threats posed by political Islam and separatist movements. Teaching on Atatürkism was expanded to cover all courses taught at all levels and types of schools... Teaching programs on Kemalist principles, the struggle against reactionism, and national security issues were also extended to top bureaucrats and prayer leaders.”<sup>284</sup> Moreover, “it further fragmented the political centre and weakened centre-right political parties, which had traditionally opposed both political Islam and radical secularism.”<sup>285</sup> It also weakened the Constitutional institutions by “disciplining” the state and society by force rather than agreed-upon democratic mechanisms, rule of law and democratic legitimacy.

The leading figure of the memorandum and the deputy chief of general staff, Çevik Bir summarized the intervention as “we balanced the wheels of democracy”<sup>286</sup>. General Erol Özkasnak, the secretary general of MGK, framed the intervention as a “post-modern coup” in line with the popular usage of the day<sup>287</sup>. The concern about framing the intervention within the democratic system can be attributed to three major factors: Maintaining its popular support, appealing to European Union, which was then perceived as the only way to proceed by an overwhelming majority of society and political actors, and Turkish Army’s fashion and tradition of intervention.

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<sup>283</sup>See for the list of articles in MGK declaration: <http://bianet.org/bianet/siyaset/8236-28-subat-kararlari>

<sup>284</sup>Cizre Ümit, Çınar Menderes (2003), *ibid.*, p. 312.

<sup>285</sup>Söyler Mehtap, *The Turkish Deep State*, London, Routledge, 2015, p. 153.

<sup>286</sup>See for details: <https://www.turkiyegazetesi.com.tr/gundem/555875.aspx>

<sup>287</sup>See for details: <https://www.evrensel.net/haber/24118/demokrasiye-balans-ayari-yaptik>



1997 military intervention is specifically important for the establishment of AKP. The securitization of Islamic manifestations went far beyond the political space and the closure of RP and exercised a negating effect in the public space and civil society. For the MGK that carried out the intervention such an assertive implementation of secularism, that is to say, *laiklik*, was “a guarantee for the regime (establishment), democracy, societal peace and the modern lifestyle”<sup>288</sup>. The TAF’s effort to bring a convincing argument for the intervention implicitly acknowledges the “democratic deficiency in Turkey’s political landscape in terms of civil-military relations, individual rights, and the securitization of public life, but tried to justify them on the grounds that, as part of the military’s combat against internal enemies, yet, these measures were ‘exceptional’ and ‘corrective,’ expressing some awareness of the importance of the democracy-centred security architecture in post–Cold War Europe.”<sup>289</sup> In the following years, the leader of ANAP and Prime Minister of Turkey between 1997 and 1999, Mesut Yılmaz asserted that such conception of national security hindered national development and therefore, must be subject to public debate<sup>290</sup>. However, this proposal of de-securitization fell ineffective in the presence of undisputed dominance of TAF in security debate. All in all, despite the fact that the policies and discourse of Islamist Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan posed a threat to democratic credentials of Turkey, military intervention, perhaps, deteriorated them much further.

### **1.2.5. The Quadruple Legs of the Opportunity Space and the Birth of the AKP**

This thesis utilizes the concept of “opportunity space” rather than the more popular concept of “opportunity structure” that covers “socially structured means and rules available for a social group to achieve its aims and interests, which are culturally defined and oriented toward social success”<sup>291</sup>. Opportunity space, as it is used in this thesis, involves the attitudes and actions of other actors and the relative advantage and disadvantage of the subject group or party. The formation of AKP is tightly related to recognition and exploitation of an opportunity space in Turkish politics which had four main dimensions; a) the trauma created by February 28 military intervention among the conservative and Islamist masses, b) low economic performance of 1990s and the crisis of 2001, c) dissolution of centre-right politics, d) securitization of Islamist politics.

#### **1.2.5.1. February 28 Military Intervention**

<sup>288</sup>Şahin Muzaffer, *MGK 28 Şubat Öncesi ve Sonrası*, Ankara, Ufuk Kitabevi, 1998, p. 77.

<sup>289</sup>Cizre Ümit, Çınar Menderes, (2003), *ibid.*, p. 314.

<sup>290</sup>See for details: <https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/basinda-genelkurmay-yilmaz-gerginligi-38257074>

<sup>291</sup> See the definition at: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/9781118430873.est0268>

Dominating the discursive space on the issues pertaining to national security, the TAF enjoyed a position that was supra-political and impartial on paper. Therefore, it maintained a status far beyond its counterparts in established democracies. Defining the national security matters and being its ultimate operator provided a position of guardianship over society and politics to TAF. Being unaccountable to public scrutiny and protected against the civilian judiciary, it functioned within significant autonomy. However, the people that were defined as threat to national security, the pro-Kurdish and Islamic groups, were alienated and antagonized by the TAF. Such “targeted securitization” created a sense of victimhood among these groups and rendered them susceptible to exploitation by demagogues and ethnic-religious leaders.

Before the intervention in 1997 TAF communicated a bill that warned the government about the presence of socio-political efforts to Islamize Turkish state and society and asked it to take action against them. The intervention was carried out upon the passive rejection of the government on these demands. The government was implicitly warned, then explicitly warned and after that the memorandum took place reminding the possibility of an all inclusive military coup aiming a full seizure of power. In the MGK meeting of November 1997, the “religious backwardness” was mentioned as the top threat to the country<sup>292</sup>, indicating the co-optation between defining the threat and taking action against it.

The intervention triggered and accelerated AKP’s formation, and imprinted a scar on the minds of its ruling elite as well as its supporters. They had to avoid confrontations with the TAF and eventually takeover its control. Therefore, in its second year in government, that is to say, long before it consolidated its power position, the AKP set out to change the structure of MGK with a Constitutional amendment and increased the civilian representation to 9 while the number of top military generals remained 5.<sup>293</sup> With the same amendment the advisory position of the MGK was further underlined while it was emphasized that the executive power on issues pertaining to security lied with the government. A more radical change in the structure of high command of TAF would take place in the aftermath of 2016 coup attempt as Erdoğan purges a huge portion of high level officers with the accusation that they joined the coup attempt on behalf of Gülenists. AKP’s management of secularist

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<sup>292</sup>Religious backwardness was defined as the highest threat in the most important security document of the country: *The National Security Policy Document*. The document is drafted and approved by MGK who suffered from military dominance until 2010s. See the details of priority change in the threat conception: <https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/irtica-tehdidi-devletin-en-onemli-belgesinde-39271634>

<sup>293</sup>See for the details of this historic change: <http://arsiv.ntv.com.tr/news/115795.asp>

establishment, that is to say, TAF and high judiciary would follow a trajectory that started with *co-optation* and ended with *takeover*. Until the takeover the Party used its struggle with the tutelary secularist bureaucracy on two fronts: For the liberals and democratically sensitive segments of the society (as well as the EU authorities) it was a struggle for democracy, for the conservative masses it was also a fight to domesticate the secularist establishment and expand the public space for the exercise of religious practices.

#### 1.2.5.2. 2001 Economic Crisis

The overall political instability of 1990s deprived this decade of the political will that would follow the liberal economic transformation initiated by Özal in early 1980s. The presence of state as an agent of production and service in many sectors created negative effects such as inefficiency, wasteful and unfair use of resources, and more importantly widespread corruption. There have been multiple economic crises with different magnitudes in 1991, 1994, 1998 and 1999, which were not followed by any structural reform in any form of sustainable remedy. According to a report prepared by Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey (TOBB), “The Report on Extravagancy in Economy”, the financial fragility of the country was as high as 41 %, which amounted to three times of the average of industrialized countries.<sup>294</sup> The Report puts forward four political reasons for these crises: a) Frequent elections, b) Weak and ineffective coalitions (10 governments in 11 years), c) Lack of political will for economic reform packages, d) Political indifference towards and lack of focus on economic problems.

Eventually the politico-economically combustible environment culminated into 2001 economic crises, which was triggered by a political crisis at a MGK meeting in February, 2001. The tension between President Ahmet Necdet Sezer, a staunch Kemalist, and Bülent Ecevit, the Prime Minister from the centre-of-the left Democratic Left Party (DSP) exploded into a political crisis. In two days, the overnight interest rates hiked to 7500 %, as Istanbul Stock Exchange dropped 18.1 %, both of which were unprecedented figures in Republican history. In a few days, Turkish Lira devalued 130% and inflation reached 90%.<sup>295</sup>

In a few days, the government authorities gathered together with top bureaucrats of finance and economy and declared a transition from monetary tightening to floating rate

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<sup>294</sup>See the details of *The Report on Extravagancy in Economy* on TOBB website: <https://www.tobb.org.tr/Documents/yayinlar/savurganlik.doc>. The report provides a detailed analysis of the crises that took place in 1990s with a specific focus on 2001 crisis.

<sup>295</sup>Karpat Kemal (2015), *ibid.*, p. 241.

policy, which in effect was a covert devaluation<sup>296</sup>. In the following week, Kemal Derviş, a Turkish citizen who was functioning as a deputy World Bank chairman was invited to Turkey. The invitation of Derviş and his assignment as the top official of Turkish economy is a striking act for two major reasons: First, he was invited by a leftist Prime minister known for his anti-capitalist policies. Second, the economic policies of Derviş would later constitute the basis of the AKP's management of economy. In this regard the assignment of Derviş indicates a melting point for Turkish ideological positioning and further step toward pragmatic politics.

The 2001 crisis sets a good example to the conviction that economic performance of the governments play greater role on voting behaviour during and after crises. Being regarded as the biggest economic crisis of the Republican history, it shaped the preferences of voters across different political traditions as it pushed all three member parties of the coalition during the crises below 10 % election threshold<sup>297</sup>. Instead the voter placed the Justice and Development Party, in the government in 2002 elections, a party that was founded in 2001 and did not have much to offer in terms of its past performance other than the credibility of its leading cadres and that of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. All the other alternatives in the centre-right and centre-left had created frustration within the electorate in the course of the last decade. The AKP, on the other hand, acknowledged that the economic policies of Derviş had already started bearing fruits, and as young party it would be better for them to follow suit. Therefore, they would stay away from populist changes from Derviş's management of economy in their rule and make the economic performance as the major field of their success and the booster of popularity among the electorate.

### **1.2.5.3. Dissolution of Centre-Right**

Özal's economically and politically liberal-leaning reforms lost momentum as he became the President, a rather symbolic figure, leaving the more executive position of Prime Ministry. In the first elections (1991), ANAP, his former party, lost the first position to DYP, just another centre right party with a more reconciliatory orientation with the secular establishment. While DYP won 27% of the votes, ANAP got 24% and RP got almost 17%, indicating that the centre right in Turkey has electoral persuasion for about 50% of the voter<sup>298</sup>. When the votes of more nationalist and conservative parties are added the overall

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<sup>296</sup>See the figures of the 2001 crisis on: [http://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/haber/diger/14676/21\\_Subat\\_Krizi.html](http://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/haber/diger/14676/21_Subat_Krizi.html)

<sup>297</sup>Kapusızoğlu Mehmet, "Ekonomik Kriz, 2002 Seçimleri ve Seçmen Tercihi", *Sosyal ve Beşeri Bilimler Dergisi*, vol. 3, no. 2, 2011, p. 121-131.

<sup>298</sup>See the elections results here: <http://www.ysk.gov.tr/tr/1983-2007-yillari-arasi-milletvekili-genel-secimleri/3008>

percentage of the right wing parties rises to 70%. In the 1995 general elections this proportion did not change, yet, the inner distribution of the votes have changed with RP, an explicitly Islamist party winning the highest number of votes with 21%, further downgrading the centre-right parties, ANAP and DYP, to 19% each.

Unlike the centre-right conservative parties that did not represent much else from the status quo in the country, the RP, with its explicitly “Islamist themes, such as championing the periphery against the centre, anti-Westernism and emphasizing the particularism of Islamic culture, found resonance among both a new generation of students and other intellectuals... and a new generation of the oppressed who have recently been abandoned to the whims of the free market by their formerly protective nation-state”<sup>299</sup>. With its criticism on the West and the status quo in Turkey, the RP had accomplished to expand its voter base and exceeded the centre-right parties. The centre-right parties, as they have won most of the elections since the beginning of multi-party period, had established a mutual accommodation with the secularist establishment. While they do not resort to anti-establishment discourse contra secularists, the secularist establishment, in return, has tolerated the less-than-fundamental populist conservatism of these parties. As the centre-right parties governed the country, the establishment set them boundaries on the management of public and political space.

However, in 1990s, the centre-right governments were primarily linked with ineffective coalition governments that were perceived as the main reason for political instability and economic failures in the eyes of the electorate, including a meaningful portion of their own. “Corruption and rent-seeking activities have overtime rendered the control of public expenditures more and more difficult. While governments have over the years levied new taxes and admonished the people to live frugally, they themselves have wasted the financial resources in untold manners.”<sup>300</sup> The leftist parties were not immune to the prevalent corruption of the time. The İSKİ (Istanbul Water and Sewerage Services) scandal, for example, as a major corruption case, downgraded the votes of the leftist SHP from 36% in 1989 to 20% in 1994 and ousted the party from the seat of Istanbul metropolitan municipality<sup>301</sup>.

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<sup>299</sup>Gülalp Haldun, “Political Islam in Turkey: The Rise and Fall of Refah Party”, *The Muslim World*, vol. 89, no. 1, 1999, p. 22-41.

<sup>300</sup>Koch Levent, Chaudry, M. A., “February 2001 Crisis in Turkey: Causes and Consequences”, *The Pakistan Development Review*, vol. 40, no. 4, p. 467-486.

<sup>301</sup>See for details: <https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/nurettin-sozenin-basi-deritte-22-yil-sonra-yine-iski-40191930>

In such a socio-political environment of frustration with major political parties, the RP articulated the prevalence of corruption, and created a significant persuasion for its “Just Order” among the conservative voter. RP claimed that it promoted a moral order that is Just Order, underpinned by Islamic norms. Despite the fact that it was a vague concept without a specific roadmap and functional imperatives, it had reached an unexpected level of persuasion because it had not been tested in government before and the frustration with the right wing parties was very high. The RP has also been successful with its “expressions of the grievances of small businesses, such as the unfair distribution of government loans, the unfair tax structures and the proposal for interest-free lending.”<sup>302</sup> The Just Order has been a successful election call in terms of protection for Small and Mid-size Enterprises against the encroachments of state (tax burden) and domination of large conglomerates. In the 2002 elections that carried the AKP to the government, both centre-right parties had been reduced below 10% election threshold, as DYP won 9,5% and ANAP could manage only 5%. Dissolution of traditional centre-right conservative politics in Turkey had paved the way for AKP’s “re-structuring”<sup>303</sup> of the centre-right and win in the first election it joined.

#### **1.2.5.4. Shut Down of RP and Ban on Its Leading Figures: *Coming Out of a Broken Shell***

Since Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and the overwhelming majority of the AKP elite come from the National Outlook Movement (NOM)<sup>304</sup>, the analysis of NOM is of the essence to understand the worldview and political mindset of these elite. Furthermore, as the AKP was founded on a publicly declared departure from NOM, it is crucial to identify ruptures and continuities between the AKP and NOM tradition.

Like many other socio-political enterprises that were excluded by the Republican discourse, such as; socialists and pro-Kurdish movements, the conservatives started becoming more visible in the public space which was expanded by liberal state practices brought about by 1962 Constitution. However, “Until Necmettin Erbakan established the National Order Party (*Milli Nizam Partisi*, MNP), the predecessor of the three succeeding Islamist parties, in January 1970; Islamists had either formed conservative factions in a centre-right party or had remained underground.”<sup>305</sup> Foundation of MNP gave the Islamists the opportunity to build their own political agenda and campaign for it. The MNP survived only one year until it was

<sup>302</sup>Gülalp Haldun (1999), *ibid.*, p. 26.

<sup>303</sup>See for a brief analysis of AKP’s first election victory:

<https://www.yenisafak.com/arsiv/2002/kasim/06/fkoru.html>

<sup>304</sup> Relevant statistics is given in the following part of the thesis.

shut down by the Constitutional Court with the allegations that it violated the principles of *laiklik* as framed in the Constitution and Law of Political Parties following the 1971 military intervention. The National Salvation Party (*Milli Selamet Partisi*, MSP), which was founded as a follow-up of the MNP obtained 11% of the votes in 1973 general elections. Being involved in a multiplicity of coalition governments, MSP had an electoral setback in 1977 elections with 8.6% and eventually was shut down following 1980 military coup with all other major parties. In 1983 Welfare Party (RP) was founded as a follow-up of MSP, again, under Erbakan leadership and won 7.2% in 1987 and 9.8% in 1989 elections.<sup>306</sup>

During Özal's reign (1983-1993) and in the following years, a process of urbanization of conservative masses took place. "As Islamist supporters moved from provincial towns and villages to urban centres, they were more likely to gain access to formal education and opportunities for upward social mobility. Islamist groups responded to the needs and aspirations of the newly urban who might be university students, professionals, shopkeepers, merchants, or workers."<sup>307</sup> With the business opportunities initiated by Özal's export-oriented economic policies and horizontal solidarity that they established, conservative business elite called "Anatolian Tigers" started to emerge from provincial enterprises and challenge the established secular business elite.

As briefly framed under the previous title, the RP exploited the dissolution of center-right conservatism in 1990s and became the party that won the highest vote in 1995 elections. Yet, the reckless and less-than-secular discourse of RP created existential concerns not only among the secularist judicio-military bureaucracy but also among the large segments of society and triggered a process that ended up with 1997 military intervention. In the aftermath of the intervention, upon the application of chief public prosecutor of the time, the RP was shut down by the Constitutional Court in January 1998. The indictment was grounded on the accusation that the RP had become the centre platform of anti-secular activities. The RP elite's implicit and explicit calls for the establishment of an Islamist regime and elimination of those who would prevent such an establishment, by force if necessary.<sup>308</sup> "Erbakan, facing the counter mobilization of the secular state, attempted once again to reframe his party's view on secularism. He argued the WP was the guardian and the real assurance of secularism in the

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<sup>305</sup>Narlı Nilüfer, "The Rise of the Islamist Movement in Turkey", *Middle East Review of International Affairs*, vol.1, no. 3, 1999, p. 38-48.

<sup>306</sup>See for election results: <https://secim.haberler.com/1973/>

<sup>307</sup>Narlı Nilüfer (1999), *ibid.*, p. 40.

<sup>308</sup>For the full indictment, see: <https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/dunya/1997deki-refah-partisi-kapatma-davasi-iddianamesi-8460645>



country, that it was only demanding secularism according to Western standards, that is, a complete separation of church and state.”<sup>309</sup> Yet, this softening and reframing of discourse did not prevent the closure of RP and political ban brought upon him and several other prominent figures of the party.

### 1.2.6. Cleavage in the Islamist Movement: *Traditionalists vs. Reformists*

The closure of RP did not create significant reaction from the broader society and the Islamist NOM was pressed heavily by the secular establishment. The NOM however founded a new party, the Virtue Party (*FaziletPartisi*, FP) under the shadow leadership of Erbakan as he was banned from politics by the Constitutional Court. In addition to the existing deputies of the RP, the FP transferred some prominent deputies from the centre right ANAP, and with this slight move towards centre right, it aimed to portray as different from a mere continuation of RP. The FP then came up with a clear implication that it was not a threat to secular system, and giving up the harsh the Islamist rhetoric and Just Order as the *hammerhead of its discourse*, it declared commitment to secular democracy and named its first official convention as “The Feast of Democracy”.<sup>310</sup>

In the manifesto of 1999 elections, the FP emphasized the necessity of democracy, secularism, human rights and called for redesigning of over-centralized unitary system. As the need for reform in all executive, judiciary and legislative branches of state was underlined, corruption and oppression were warned against in the manifesto.<sup>311</sup> Anti-Western discourse of traditional Islamism was also abandoned and Turkey’s historical trajectory is mentioned as a frame of reference in the Development Program presented to Turkish Parliament by the party. While the relations with the West is underlined as the first item in the foreign relations, the relations with Islamic and Turkish countries were mentioned after the relations with far East signifying a change in the priority.<sup>312</sup>

Despite all these efforts of reframing, the NOM tradition and Islamists in general did not have a significant heritage as a reference for the promotion of democracy. They had a rather vague and extremely pragmatic take on the established political system of Turkey. While they never rejected democracy and secularism, they have never openly accepted them

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<sup>309</sup>Eligür Banu (2010), *ibid.*, p. 227.

<sup>310</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 235.

<sup>311</sup>See the full text of 1999 Election Manifesto of FP:

[http://www.esam.org.tr/pdfler/siyasi\\_dokumanlar/4%20FP/fp\\_1999\\_secim\\_beyannamesi.pdf](http://www.esam.org.tr/pdfler/siyasi_dokumanlar/4%20FP/fp_1999_secim_beyannamesi.pdf)

<sup>312</sup>See the full text of the Development Program at Turkish Parliament’s website: <https://acikerisim.tbmm.gov.tr/xmlui/bitstream/handle/11543/698/199801418.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>



either; perhaps, they saw democracy as a way to power, rather than a fundamental value and tolerated secularism to this end.<sup>313</sup> As the rising star of the pragmatic Islamism, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan said; “Democracy is a tram for us, and we get off when we come to the station that we want”<sup>314</sup>, when he was the municipal mayor of Istanbul for RP. Despite the visible change that democracy had become the platform of reframing and redefinition for Islamists<sup>315</sup>, there was a broad concern among the broader society that democracy was seen as the only way of survival by the Islamists against the encroachments of secularist judicio-military bureaucracy and they would abandon democracy when they get powerful enough to dominate the system. These concerns make sense considering the fact that democracy has become the dominant item on the agenda of Islamists only after being decisively punished by the TAF.

Despite the discursive ownership of democracy, the FP limited its defence of basic rights and freedoms to right to wear Islamic headscarf and Imam-hatip schools.<sup>316</sup> It gained 15.4% of the votes in general elections of 1999 and fell to the third place, indicating 6 percent loss since the previous election. However, in local elections the party became the first, bringing popular mayors to the fore at the cost of Erbakan, who was still indirectly ruling the party. When a newly elected female parliamentarian from the FP, Merve Kavakçı, entered into the oath taking ceremony of the Parliament wearing headscarf, it triggered outrage from political and bureaucratic *laik* actors. Bülent Ecevit, the chairman of Democratic Left Party (DSP) who won the highest vote rate with 22% in the elections called for forcing her out of Parliament and said: “In Turkey no one intervenes into how women wear in their private sphere. Yet, this is not a private sphere; it is the highest institution of the state. Whoever works here has to follow the rules and traditions of the state. This is not a place to challenge the state. Please tell this woman her boundaries.”<sup>317</sup> The chief public prosecutor of time, Vural Savaş, opened a closure case for FP indicting the party with “becoming a centre of anti-secular activities”. Savaş described the party as a continuation of the Islamist tradition and called it a “malignant tumour in metastases”. Upon framing the FP as an existential threat to the national security, it had almost become to shut it down for the survival of the Republic.<sup>318</sup> Süleyman Demirel, then the President of Turkey called Kavakçı as an “agent

<sup>313</sup>Karpat Kemal (2015), *ibid.*, p. 232.

<sup>314</sup>See for Erdoğan’s statement on democracy: <https://medium.com/tr724/demokrasi-bizim-i%C3%A7in-bir-tramvayd%C4%B1r-istedi%C4%9Fimiz-dura%C4%9Fa-gelince-ineriz-dfba77fb1a33>

<sup>315</sup>Gülalp Haldun, “The Poverty of Democracy in Turkey: The Refah Party Episode”, *New Perspectives on Turkey*, vol. 21, no. 1, 1999, p. 35-59.

<sup>316</sup>Gülalp Haldun, *Kimlikler Siyaseti*, İstanbul, Metis Yayınları, 2003, p. 13.

<sup>317</sup>See the video of this speech: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gvT2QMpjQeQ>

<sup>318</sup>See the details of VP’s closure case and allegations of chief public prosecutor: <http://arsiv.ntv.com.tr/news/90280.asp>

provocateur connected to some other states”<sup>319</sup> In June 22, 2001, the FP was shut down by the Constitutional Court as the 4th Islamist political party of the country. In other words, the Supreme Court of Appeals and Constitutional Court, key organs of the state controlled by the secularist establishment *defined the Islamist FP as an existential threat and took necessary measures* as consecutive steps of securitization.

The FP had failed to convince both the political actors and judicial authority that it was not a continuation of the Islamist tradition, and there was no need for the military to step in. “The VP (FP), having been weakened as a result of the counter mobilization of the secular state institutions, framed the issue of Turkey’s possible membership in the EU as a new political opportunity structure. The Islamist movement, which had been opposed to seeking membership in the EU, started to argue for Turkey’s admission.”<sup>320</sup> European Union’s call for reforms to protect civilian politics from the encroachment of TAF fell in line with the political survival of the Islamists who felt threatened by the TAF’s direct and indirect interventions. The FP parliamentarians reframed the ban on the headscarf as a violation of human rights in line with EU’s freedom oriented reform demands from Turkey for membership. Therefore it would be fair to claim that the re-orientation of the Islamist politics in a pro-democracy discourse has to do with being cornered by bureaucratic establishment in Turkey. In a similar fashion, the complete transformation of anti-Western foreign policy into a pro-EU (and implicitly pro-Western) one would bring external leverage to Islamist politics against secular establishment.

The closure case of FP soon after its predecessor RP indicated that the secularist establishment would not “tolerate” an Islamist party in government. On this recognition the Islamists dropped the overall political and societal transformation from their agenda and re-positioned themselves somewhere closer to centre-right conservative politics. Overall popular support for Islamism eroded and it became clear that “Turkish (conservative) voters tend to adopt religious identity as a social common denominator and therefore distance themselves from political Islam...and prefer that it (Islam) asserts itself at the individual and social levels rather than in the political realm.”<sup>321</sup> This assertion would be proved correct with AKP rising to power through a quick re-orientation in conservative politics, just in a year’s time.

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<sup>319</sup>See the details on the headline of a secularist daily: <http://www.gecmisgazete.com/haber/-ajan-provokator-u-bilerek-soyledim>

<sup>320</sup>Eligür Banu (2010), *ibid.*, p. 241.

<sup>321</sup>Yıldız Ahmet, “Problematizing the Intellectual and Political Vestiges”, Ü. Cizre (Ed), *Secular and Islamic Politics in Turkey: The Making of Justice and Development Party*, Routledge, London, 2008, p. 41.

### 1.2.7. Double Securitization of Erdoğan and Reformists in the Islamist Tradition

The overall performance of Islamists in power during Erbakan's prime ministry and his shadow leadership of FP were weak. The miscalculation of FP elite in Kavakçı incident added insult to injury and boosted the discontent of the younger generation of FP leadership led by Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, then the municipal mayor of Istanbul<sup>322</sup>. Erdoğan had been indicted with "inciting hatred on ethnic and religious basis" by the public prosecutor for a poem<sup>323</sup> that he recited at a rally. The poem belonged to Ziya Gökalp, the architect of Turkish nationalism who proposed co-existence of Islam in the Turkish identity, and said; "The mosques are our barracks, the domes our helmets, the minarets our bayonets, and the believers our soldiers". Despite the fact that the poem had been recited countless times by countless other people, the justified ruling of the court stated that "he was reviving the divisions between religious and non-religious ones" and sentenced him to 10 months of imprisonment. This rather vague accusation and the following imprisonment came short before the 1999 elections; therefore, as the rising star of FP, he was effectively removed from the election campaign by the secularist establishment.

This systemic and relatively external securitization was not the only one Erdoğan faced in the last years of 1990s. The discontented reformists had already created an intra-party opposition to Erbakan's shadow leadership. The "case to outlaw the FP led to a framing contest among the conservatives controlled by Necmettin Erbakan and the young reformists led by then Istanbul mayor Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. Erdoğan, having been sentenced to prison in April 1998...announced that he had changed his views. He contacted Western diplomats and journalists, and started to praise parliamentary democracy and Turkey's endeavours to enter the EU."<sup>324</sup> Despite Erdoğan's de facto leadership of the reformist camp within the FP, he was not a parliament member and therefore, the reformists chose Abdullah Gül, a British-educated economist to represent them in the First Convention of FP in May 2000.

The Convention displayed a clear division within the party that manifested as the competition of two proxies. Recai Kutan, the leader of the FP for Erbakan who was banned from active politics represented the traditional wing, while Abdullah Gül who led the intra-party opposition in the absence of Erdoğan who also was banned from politics represented the

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<sup>322</sup>Jenkins Gareth, "Muslim Democrats in Turkey?", *Survival: Global Politics and Strategy*, vol. 45, no.1, 2007, p. 45-66.

<sup>323</sup>See the details of the poem that Erdoğan recited and the following imprisonment: <https://www.nytimes.com/2003/05/11/magazine/the-erdogan-experiment.html>

<sup>324</sup>Eligür Banu (2010), *ibid.*, p. 242.

reformist wing. As Kutan obtained the votes of 633 delegates, Gül got 521 votes<sup>325</sup>, signifying a sizeable threat to conservatives. In the following period, Erbakan attacked the reformist intra-party opposition in the worst possible way in the Islamist narrative and claimed that Erdoğan “had become the cashier of Zionism”<sup>326</sup>. Therefore, Erdoğan and his comrades had to overcome practices of securitization both from within their own party and the secular establishment, in other words, *internal* and *external securitization*. From another perspective Erdoğan leadership had to struggle with the *legal securitization* of the secularist establishment and *discursive securitization* of Necmettin Erbakan, the founding leader of Turkish political Islamist (NOM) tradition.

There has never been a public debate on what the reformist wing demanded from the FP’s conservative management. In terms of discourse and policies the FP had already bowed to the pressure of the secular establishment and mobilized towards centre by transferring political figures from centre-right ANAP to its executive council and nominating secular women as its Parliament members. Yet before the 1999 election Erbakan reasserted his indirect authority and nominated the people he wanted. The younger FP figures and the party executives that were transferred from ANAP were further excluded from the Party and formed an intra-party opposition. The FP failed to materialize the limits and nature of the “sudden change” that it went through under the pressure of secularist establishment. It became a popular perception that the traditionalist wing of FP had utilized or rather imported a liberal toolkit without a fundamental internal discussion. In the conception of Thomas Kuhn, this was a *retooling* effort rather than a substantial *paradigm change*. In the next elections (2002), the FP’s rather reluctant retooling would suffer an unprecedented failure against the new political formation of the reformist wing, the AKP.

### **1.2.8. Foundation of The AKP: *Politics of Fusion and Redefinition of Turkish Conservatism***

Although Turkish Islamism has been fundamentally critical towards the excessive practices of the secular establishment, it was deeply influenced by nationalism, that is, the other foundational pillar of the Republic.<sup>327</sup> Furthermore, it was not substantially influenced by the traditions of other Islamist movements as it has not expanded outside Turkey and

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<sup>325</sup>See the details of the FP Convention: <https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/erbakana-kongre-soku-39154350>

<sup>326</sup>See the details at: <https://www.ntv.com.tr/dunya/erbakandan-erdogana-agir-sozler,m3uNB9fwIEWII5AWNGx8tg>

<sup>327</sup>Ceran Fatih (2019), *ibid.*

internalized the political structure of Turkey.<sup>328</sup> Being essentially in a “national” character and using a similar reservoir of values Turkish Islamism had significant overlaps with conservatism and to a lesser degree with nationalism. With an exclusivist and anti-establishment discourse, the NOM parties, from MNP to FP, oriented themselves in further right rather than building on the common grounds that they had with conservatism.

Erdoğan and the reformist wing that he represented within the NOM intensified the reformist discourse and started shifting away from the Islamist discourse in favour of a centre-right narrative. Erdoğan’s had effectively used his time in prison to build the discursive underpinnings of his new orientation. “On his release from prison in 1999 Erdoğan, though still banned from holding public office, announced that he had changed. He actively courted Western diplomats and journalists, repeatedly praised parliamentary democracy and expressed his support for Turkey’s bid for EU membership.”<sup>329</sup> Yet, he would never disclose the details of his new orientation, and always maintain a certain level of (strategic) ambiguity, to appeal to the maximum number of voters.

When the Justice and Development Party (AKP) was founded in 2001 under the leadership of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and some previously Islamist figures, they persistently refused to be called Islamists, as they had changed their political minds. They were in search of a new line of politics to speak to a larger audience and avoid the wrath of the secularist establishment. In 2003, Erdoğan used a symbolic expression to underline the change: “We took off the shirt of National Outlook [NOM]”<sup>330</sup>. In 2005 speaking to the managers of the top 250 companies in the world at Sun Valley Conference, where he was invited as an honorary guest, he invited them to Turkey for investment and said, “Turning religion into an ideological tool and doing politics over religion are no different from assassinating the whole humanity, religion and democracy”<sup>331</sup>. It is important to note here that despite the fact that Erdoğan ultimately rejects Islamism as a socio-political agenda<sup>332</sup> and maintains it so a significant extent in his reformist period (2002-2011), in his authoritarian turn, he would return to identity politics and fuse the elements of Islamist politics into conservatism.

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<sup>328</sup>Duran Burhanettin, Çınar Menderes, “Evolution of contemporary political Islam”, Cizre Ümit (Ed), *Secular and Islamic Politics in Turkey: The Making of Justice and Development Party*, Routledge, London, 2008, p. 23.

<sup>329</sup>Jenkins Gareth (2007), *ibid.*, p. 52.

<sup>330</sup>See for a quick flow of AKP’s discourse: <https://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler-turkiye-44061258>

<sup>331</sup> See the details of Sun Valley speech of Erdoğan at: <https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/dunya/din-uzerinden-siyaset-suikasttir-332928>

<sup>332</sup>Göle Nilüfer, “Secularism and Islamism in Turkey: The Making of Elites and Counter-Elites”, *Middle East Journal*, vol. 51, no. 1, 1997, p. 46–58.

Erdoğan's statement on breakaway from the Islamist tradition was not incidental. "In the self description and initial discourse of its founding elite, the AKP represents a fundamental rupture from Islamist politics, that is to say, the NOM tradition, from which most of the party elite came. Such an essential rupture, perhaps, can best be defined as a 'paradigm shift'"<sup>333</sup>. A political paradigm involves the ends that it wants to achieve as much as the means that it employs. Although the declared change was devoid of details, The Development and Democratization Programme of the Party<sup>334</sup> before the 2002 elections expressed allegiance to democracy, secularism and pro-Western orientation of the state, the emphasis being laid upon the EU membership. A clear stress was also laid upon the commitment to free-market system and continuation of the IMF regulations that were put into effect by the previous government. Identifying the pervasive and persistent problems of the country, the Programme prioritized basic rights as they are defined in international documents such as, Universal Declaration of Human Rights, European Convention on Human Rights, Helsinki Final Act and Paris Charter for a New Europe as the basis of democracy and acknowledges Atatürk's reforms as the guide to a developed civilisation.

Seeking international legitimacy and support, Abdullah Gül, Erdoğan's long brother-in-arm in the reformist wing of the FP who would later serve as the President of Turkey (2007-2014), spoke at The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, underlining the change that Turkey was going through under their leadership: "The current government in Turkey is very clear about joining the EU. This is at the top of its agenda. Turkey will fully satisfy all EU accession rules, the so-called Copenhagen criteria... These reforms are not concessions to the EU; the Turkish government will approve the reforms not only for the EU but for the Turkish people as well."<sup>335</sup> The speech clearly *prioritizes* the EU-access reforms as the major driving engine of democratic reforms, and then mentions their utility for Turkish people. Considering Abdullah Gül as more liberal and moderate face of the newly founded AKP, this statement suggests that the ruling elite of the AKP prioritized democracy as a strategic political reference to join the EU in the absence of a strong bottom-up demand from Turkish society, whose priority was on economic and political stability.

### **1.2.8.1. Conservative Democrats: *Coercion and Consent***

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<sup>333</sup>Ceran Fatih (2019), *ibid.*, p. 181.

<sup>334</sup>See the details of The Development and Democratization programme of the AKP at: <https://acikerisim.tbmm.gov.tr/xmlui/bitstream/handle/11543/926/200205071.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

<sup>335</sup>See the website of The Washington Institute for Near East Policy for a full overview of Gül's speech at: <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/the-u.s.-turkish-relationship-prospects-and-perils>

A clear commitment to free market economy and allegiance to IMF regulations constituted a fundamental difference for the AKP from traditional NOM politics, which has always prioritized a state-centric heavy industry program. Liberal tendencies of the Party were not limited to its management of economy and a relatively cosmopolitan mindset was endorsed by the AKP on the recognition of ethnic, religious and cultural diversity of the country. The anti-Western foreign policy orientation of NOM was also abandoned for a rather EU-friendly approach, which was consistent with the market economy and cosmopolitan domestic approach. All in all, the very establishment of the AKP represented a breakaway from the discourse of NOM Islamism regarding the management of economy, social acceptance and international positioning of the country. The establishment of the AKP was the materialization of a shift for a centre-right system-friendly party<sup>336</sup>. The leadership of the Party, most of who were former Islamists, had dropped the ideologically loaded rigid politics alongside the anti-systemic stance.<sup>337</sup> In line with this glasnost-like opening, the first election motto they used was, “Everything for Turkey”, while they used the slogan “We are Turkey” throughout the rally.

However, this opening was a little too abrupt. When the two major figures of the AKP; Erdoğan and Gül, were in NOM politics they voiced nothing short of a clear anti-Western discourse: While Erdoğan described it as a Christian union, Gül framed it as a Catholic union, implying Turkey had no place in the EU simply because of religious difference. In the run-up of AKP’s establishment, however, they turned into pro-EU champions and utilized it as to counterweight the secularist establishment who had a rather hit-and-miss relationship with the West, The establishment had a major cleavage with the EU because of its authoritarian understanding of statecraft and the widespread conviction that they had on the alleged support of the West for secessionist pro-Kurdish PKK. Both Erdoğan and Gül had turned their previously ardent anti-Western stance into a staunch pro-Western viewpoint and publicly declared the change without providing detail on the rationale of this rather radical change. The AKP leadership had seen the opportunity space in Turkish politics stemming from the absence of a mass party that championed the EU membership and was ready to undertake the necessary steps of reforms. Thus, they positioned themselves as the champions of reform oriented domestic policy alongside a pro-Western foreign policy, and used it for; a) legitimizing themselves in the eyes of secular elite and a broader voter base, b) as a

<sup>336</sup> Altınordu Ateş, “The Political Incorporation of Anti-System Religious Parties: the Case of Turkish Political Islam (1994–2011)”, *Qualitative Sociology*, 2016, vol. 39, p. 147-171.

<sup>337</sup> Göle Nilüfer, “Islamic Visibilities and Public Sphere in Islam”, Göle Nilüfer, Amman Ludwig, (Eds), *Islam in Public: Turkey, Iran, and Europe*, Istanbul Bilgi University Press, Istanbul, 2006, p. 4.



bargaining chip for domestic debates do declare that they were pious Muslims but pro-Western contemporaries at the same time, c) seeking Western support by aligning themselves with EU's demands.

The AKP has been persuasive on conservative electorate, thus, won the first elections (2002) that they joined with 34%<sup>338</sup> obtaining 363 out of 550 seats in the parliament and easily forming a single party government. In his victory speech, implicitly embracing secularism, Erdoğan mentioned the ideals of Atatürk, promised employment and declared that people elected the AKP because they wanted basic rights and freedoms, a better functioning democracy and effective government. He also mentioned the greatness of Turkish nation and the eternal survival of their state, discursively reconciling with centrist politics and secularist bureaucracy. Recognizing the cosmopolitan nature of Turkish society, he emphasized respect for different lifestyles, and mentioned EU-accession as the primary aim of foreign policy<sup>339</sup>. In the speech no element of Islamist politics was mentioned as no group of society was antagonized.

Delivering an opening speech at 'International Conservatism and Democracy Symposium' that his Party organized in 2004, Erdoğan disclosed important elements of AKP's self identification: "The AKP identified its political philosophy as 'conservative democracy' and aims at merging our tradition with international heritage... The AKP represents a new political understanding and style in Turkish politics."<sup>340</sup> Underlining the *transitivity* between different political traditions and ideologies, he continued as follows: "A significant interaction is observed between socialism, liberalism and conservatism blurring the boundaries between them. It is time for transitivity between different traditions and formation of new venues of politics." Repeating the self-identification of conservatism he added; "AKP is a mass party based on conservatism...and it follows a *politics-of-centre*."

A poll conducted before the 2002 elections indicated an interesting composition of voter base for the AKP: "26.8 percent came from the Virtue Party (FP), 19.1 percent came from the Nationalist Action Party (MHP), 9.8 percent came from the Democratic Left Party (DLP), 9.6 percent came from the Motherland Party (MP), 6.9 percent came from the True Path Party (DYP), 3.8 percent came from the other parties, and 24 percent came from those

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<sup>338</sup>See for details of the election results:

<http://www.ysk.gov.tr/doc/dosyalar/docs/Milletvekili/1983-2007/Turkiye.pdf>

<sup>339</sup>See the 2002 victory speech of Erdoğan at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rA9M5MyK3hE>

<sup>340</sup>See the full text of Erdoğan's speech and the other speeches of the Conference at: <http://www.akparti.org.tr/media/272223/uluslararasi-muhafazakarlik-ve-demokrasi-sempozyumu.pdf>



who had not voted in 1999<sup>341</sup>. Therefore, the aforementioned claim by Erdoğan on following a politics of centre has significant substance in terms of the previous preferences of its voter base. Considering the largest portion of the voter base coming from FP of NOM tradition, Erdoğan enjoyed the support of his previous followers, reducing the newly founded Felicity Party of the NOM tradition to 2.5% in the first election. Appealing the voter base of the centre-right parties, DYP and ANAP, and right wing pro-Islamic nationalist MHP, Erdoğan pushed all of them under the 10% election threshold and deprived them of the Parliamentary representation.

However, the NOM elements survived in much larger proportions in the profile of Parliamentarians and leaders of provincial organizations. While the 55% of the provincial leadership was from the NOM origins, the Table 1 below discloses the significant disproportion between the previous political orientations of its voter base and elected parliamentarians. While the Nationalist Action Party (MHP) voters were underrepresented, the Virtue Party voters were excessively overrepresented. In other words, Erdoğan used the votes of centre-right and nationalist electorate to get former Islamists elected in both the Parliament and provincial organization.

	<b>Supporters %</b>	<b>Attendants %</b>	<b>Deputies %</b>
Virtue Party	26.8	55.9	73.5
Nationalist Action Party	19.1	9.4	6.1
Motherland Party	9.6	10.6	5.0
True Path Party	6.9	6.3	6.6
Other	13.6	3.4	4.0
Not voted for any party	24.0	14.4	5.0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table1: The political preferences of AKP’s Supporters, Provincial Members and Deputies<sup>342</sup>

**1.2.8.2. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan: The Rise of Trans-Paradigmatic Charisma**

Short before the AKP was officially founded, “a poll conducted and publicized by the Ankara Social Research Centre (ANAR) in July 2000 found that if a general election were held on that day, 30.8% of the people surveyed would vote for the party to be founded by

<sup>341</sup>Aydın Ertan, Dalmış İbrahim, “The Social Bases of the Justice and Development Party”, Ü. Cizre (Ed), *Secular and Islamic Politics in Turkey: The Making of Justice and Development Party*, London, Routledge, 2008 p. 213.  
<sup>342</sup>Aydın Ertan, Dalmış İbrahim (2008) *ibid.*, p. 216.

Tayyip Erdoğan and his associates.”<sup>343</sup> The same study indicates that the people who declared not to support any existing party constituted 29% that is excluding 8% undecided voters. These figures verify the aforementioned claim on extreme lack of trust on the existing parties and more specifically they affirm the argument of the thesis on the dissolution of centre-right. Since the Islamist tradition was already on the decline in terms of public support and Erdoğan was not given green light by Erbakan and traditionalists, his public appeal would be materialized only if he left the NOM politics. Both the *push* from the traditionalists of NOM and *pull* towards centre right because of the void created by the dissolution that it was going through created a gravitational field and an opportunity space for Erdoğan, which he would fully exploit.

In order to appeal to as broad an audience as possible without losing their claims on conservatism, Erdoğan employed a politics of *strategic ambiguity*<sup>344</sup>. As the concept suggests, he endeavoured to strike a balance between extreme specificity and identity-eroding vagueness. This is consistent with the transitivity or the erosion of ideologies that he mentioned in the International Conservatism and Democracy Symposium. Erdoğan was heavily convinced that the blurring of the boundaries between mutually exclusive traditions of politics was taking place and the old-school politics that functioned through exclusion had become obsolete. At the centre of this mindset lied *the party as the institution of politics* and *the leader as the manifestation of ideas*. As well as the institutional structure was determinant in the initial years, Erdoğan’s persona has always constituted the gravitational centre of the Party. The understanding of leader as the manifestation of ideas would facilitate personalization of power in Erdoğan and the authoritarian turn of the AKP.

As the AKP was founded by former Islamists through a paradigm change in the framework of conservative democracy, it can fairly be defined as a post-Islamist party. In this newly formed post-Islamism, the political claims of Islamism were left behind, yet, individual and social manifestations of religion were encouraged.<sup>345</sup> A survey conducted in 2002 indicated that most of the AKP members affiliated themselves with *democracy, conservatism, Islamism and nationalism*, from among 9 concepts such as democracy, conservatism, Islamism, nationalism, secularism, liberalism, social democracy and feminism<sup>346</sup>. Considering

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<sup>343</sup> Aydın Ertan, Dalmış İbrahim (2008) *ibid.*, p. 201.

<sup>344</sup> See about strategic ambiguity as a concept used in different sectors: <https://www.marshallstrategy.com/think-big-understanding-the-value-of-strategic-ambiguity/>

<sup>345</sup> Dağı İhsan, “Transformation of Islamic political identity in Turkey: Rethinking the West and Westernization”, *Turkish Studies*, 2005, vo. 6, no. 1, p. 21–37.

<sup>346</sup> Aydın Ertan, Dalmış İbrahim (2008) *ibid.*, p. 210.

the traditional conservatism of Turkey did not have much space for Islamism, this survey suggests that Erdoğan had re-defined Turkish right-wing politics through incorporating the Islamist voter into his newly-founded conservatism. As he interjected elements of Islamism into traditional centre-right, the centre of gravity of Turkish conservatism was re-located in further right. Carrying both socio-cultural elements of Islamism (in a post-Islamist political manner) and conservatism in the *melting pot of his persona*, Erdoğan performed as a “trans-paradigmatic charisma” and appealed to an overwhelming majority of conservative voters. This charisma functioned in multiple fronts, such as; *provision of intra-party order, materialization and representation of conservative (later conservative-nationalist) worldview, ground-zero of political mobilization, representative exercise of power and provision of truth content in political as well as non-political issues*. As Erdoğan’s persona increasingly overweighed the institutional nature of his party and he became the only source of public discourse in a univocal manner, most analyses of discourse are done through him, especially in the second decade of the AKP rule.

## **Conclusion**

Modernization in Turkey has been a state-centric and stat-driven process rather than a socio-economic phenomenon that followed its natural trajectory. The basic debates on the ways to progress and catch up with the West centred on identity debates, and they still shape the underlying pillars of political formation and contestation in Turkey. In other words, the current divisions in Turkish politics result from the debates that started in the second half of 19<sup>th</sup> century. When the Republic was founded in 1923, the ruling elite, most of whom were former army officers, initiated an excessively rapid yet comprehensive reform program that aimed at a civilisational transformation with the aim of building a modern nation in Western form. A modern nation that is different in its culture and identity yet shares the “universal” modern values was intended. However, the underlying forces, such as a unified market, socio-cultural commonality and a historical trajectory were less-than-present. Therefore, the elite held a conviction that they had to force-craft the nation formation. The only binding force was Islam and it was envisaged in obsolescence by the new regime that controlled the religion in a negating tone in the public space and pushed it to private space and socio-cultural and therefore, political periphery.

With such a mindset and agenda, the young Republic came with a comprehensive set of reforms that were not limited to legal and administrative change, like the reforms of the

Ottoman Empire. The reforms were deep, broad and intervening into daily lives of people from how to wear in public space to what to believe in. The preferences of the state involved suggestions as well as enforcements, and thus, securitized many aspects of the existing tradition through the bans it exercised. The bans intensified on the elements of ethnic identity and religious lifestyle, and promoted *laik* Turkish identity and its habitus. As the ideal citizen was defined as Turkish in ethnic-linguistic terms and secular in terms of lifestyle, the Republic also securitized any identity and lifestyle claims that resisted this definition. The Kurds as the largest ethnically non-Turkish group and conservative masses that constituted an easy majority of the population were denied full representation in the public space.

With transition into multi-party system in 1950, political power became subject to contestation in which the mobilization of peripheral masses mostly won, and the previously uncontested secularist establishment (judicio-military dominance) of the Republican elite came up with new apparatuses to maintain its hegemony. The retooling of the secularist establishment mostly came with traumatic interferences into civilian politics, such as military interventions and party closures, and manifested itself in the formation of institutions of control, such as; National Security Council (MGK), High Education Board (YÖK), Constitutional Court, State Security Court etc.

#### ***a. Technologies of Securitization and Acute vs. Chronic Securitization in Recent Turkish History***

The retooling of the secularist establishment came with new habituations, such as; implementing political ban on certain individuals, shutting down political parties and conducting military interventions. Reminiscent of Michel Foucault's "technologies of the self", this thesis proposes to define this set of new tools and habits that are utilized to create and maintain a certain mode of order as, "*technologies of securitization*". Based on the desired consequence, they may include a selective implementation of all political, communicative, administrative, judicial and military processes and means that span from legislation under normal circumstances to declaration of state of emergencies. Technologies of securitization co-extend with modalities of exclusion<sup>347</sup> because in the essence securitization is an act of partial or total exclusion of certain groups, individuals and processes from normal (legitimate) functioning. These technologies span from the *Constitution* as a means of legal-political constraints at systemic level to *political culture and behaviour* in

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<sup>347</sup>See Chapter 1 for the discursive modalities of exclusion.

terms of practices of securitization at interpersonal and societal level. The agents, who could be bureaucratic as well as political, tend to utilize the RSAs and ISAs of the regime to securitize the groups, individuals and processes that could pose challenge to their interests. In other words, the technologies of securitization include the overall legal-political system, the tools of the system and the agents that use them.

Furthermore, these technologies may be utilized in moderate and continuous manner or in sudden and severe fashion. For any technology, -be it discourse, policy or administrative act- to be continuous it has to be a systemic element, that is to say, it has to be acknowledged as a norm regardless of being *de facto* or *de jure*. This can perhaps be called “securitization through normal means of politics” in a specific spatio-temporal setting, and it is *chronic* in nature. The *acute* securitizations, like military interventions, come and go abruptly, yet they may leave permanent effect on the political system.

As the Republic established itself through deep and broad securitizations, the single party era (1923-1950) is determined by *chronic* securitization, because the regime was not democracy and securitization was continuous and systemic. With transition into democracy (1950), basic freedoms started to emerge, that is until the democratically elected DP started implementing oppressive policies. This decade (1950-1960) started with de-securitization, which was followed by a short period of-re-securitization. Interestingly enough the DP period resembles that of AKP and the former is modelled by the latter, as analyzed in detail in the Second Part. The securitization practices of this era exhibit a chronic nature as they have been implemented in a continuous and systemic manner. The Military intervention of 1960 kicked off an *acute securitization*, which was harsh in the restrictions that brought into individual rights and freedoms, yet it was short in duration. It ended with the making of the relatively liberal 1962 Constitution that expanded democratic rights. Therefore, this period can be identified in terms of *chronic de-securitization*. 1971 military intervention triggered another *acute securitization* period with its military-endorsed government until 1973 elections. From 1973 to 1980 a *chronic de-securitization* took place despite the chronic economic and political instability. 1980 military intervention created another acute securitization period which was deeper and broader than the previous fully fledged intervention of 1960. From 1983 onwards, Turkey started going through economic and political liberalization, which implied significant *chronic de-securitization* that ended with the military memorandum of 1997. Between 1997 and 2002, there has been a chronic process of de-securitization as the effects of the military intervention gradually decreased.

A similar evaluation on acute and chronic securitization was made on AKP's terms in power on page 297 of the thesis indicating that such practices of securitization survived on the face of changing political and bureaucratic actors due to a deeply established security culture. In this culture, and the functioning mindset, the governments were responsible for "...the realm of everyday socio-economic policy that could be entrusted to elected politicians and debated publicly. Matters pertaining to the country's national security, geopolitical orientation or core constitutional characteristics fell within state affairs, in which the tutelary actors had the first and the final word."<sup>348</sup> Therefore, the issues that pertained to the identity and security of the state have been effectively securitized in a tutelary fashion regardless of who levied the tutelage and under what regime.

The very formation of the AKP rooted in practices of securitization as well. Being securitized by both the external-systemic actors (secularist establishment) and the conservatives within the NOM tradition, the AKP came into existence through an external and internal struggle. Its success is primarily related to the recognition of the opportunity space in Turkish politics created by 1997 military intervention, economic crises, dissolution of traditional centre-right and the victimhood that stemmed from the closure of their former party. Utilizing the opportunity space, the reformist post-Islamists went through a paradigm change, re-positioned themselves in the centre-right and eventually re-defined it. Exclusion by the secular establishment and the management of the former Islamist party, and the vast opportunity space opened in front of them created a huge gravitational force for this paradigm change which not only re-positioned them but also re-defined Turkish conservatism.

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<sup>348</sup>Akkoyunlu Karabekir (2017), *ibid.*, p. 50.

## **Part 2**

## **Transformation of the AKP: *Back and Forth on the Axis of Securitization***

As this thesis was being finalized (April 2021), the AKP had been in power for 19 years as a single-party government, an unparalleled phenomenon for a political culture that is historically embodied in relatively unstable and highly fragmented political atmosphere since the inception of its democracy. Over this period, the AKP has incrementally established itself as the dominant political formation and by a multiplicity of measures, the most successful political party in Turkey's electoral history since the beginning of its multi-party elections. This unprecedented domination, however, did not take place in an uneventful straight line. In order to remain in power, the Party has gone through significant adaptations and changes in its *discourse, policy* and *alliance of power* at multiple levels of analysis, that is, from local to international. These changes necessitate periodization in the analyses of the Party which are determined by important events that act as kickoffs of new periods, such as; a) elections and referendums, b) military interventions, c) social movements, i.e., Gezi Protests, and d) governmental crises, i.e., 17/25 December corruption allegations. Each of these events changed either the direction of the policies or the intensity of them with the effect that they exercised on public and political space.

If the overall analysis is done through AKP's relations with other actors and its eventual victory, its reign can be divided into two phases: "the polemical phase" and "the



ruling phase”.<sup>349</sup> In the polemical phase, the AKP behaved as a political actor that struggled with the secularist establishment. The negation of tutelage rendered it as a pro-democracy political actor. Since the establishment was socio-politically positioned as the guardian of exclusionary identity politics with an agenda of assimilation of divergences from secular Turkish nationalism, and had the *habitus* of extra-political control over civilian politics, AKP’s struggle with the establishment elevated its democratic credentials in the eyes of the electorate as well as the observers of Turkish politics. For many, “the AKP has acquired its democratic identity through the polemical relation it had with the Kemalist regime.”<sup>350</sup> This polemical *versus* ruling periodization lays the emphasis on power relations and offers consistency in this framework. As this thesis does its assessments through the concept of securitization, it frames this polemical period as the reformist period and breaks it down into two periods; period of co-habitation with the secularist establishment and period of disarticulation of it. In this reformist period, democratic credentials rendered as *existential* values for the AKP, yet, the following authoritarian turn (*circa* 2011) disclosed that they have not been *essential* for the Party.

Promoting democracy and emphasizing the importance of popular will created a strategic positioning for the AKP contra tutelary powerhouse, that is, the secularist establishment. As the Party obtained its power position from the democratic processes and public will, it promoted them as the only legitimate means to power. The ruling phase, which started after 2011 elections has become a test for the Party’s adherence to democratic politics and remaining in the boundaries of democracy as it effectively disarticulated the secularist establishment until then. Exercising unchecked power in the ruling phase, the AKP had two options; either to disarticulate the institutional structure of tutelage, or to appropriate it in the ways that best suit its interests. The Party did the latter in line with Louis Althusser’s well known assertion that revolutionaries do not necessarily abolish the RSAs and ISAs after they change the regime as they see them useful in the post-revolution period.

While the tutelary bureaucracy was eliminated and the institutions through which they operated were taken over by the AKP, the quantitative measures indicate that as of mid 2010s, Turkey’s record for basic rights and freedoms were not better than they were in early 2000s, that is, before the AKP came to power. “Human rights reports by AI (Amnesty International) and HRW (Human Rights Watch) have consistently documented the following human rights

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<sup>349</sup>Tombuş Ertuğ H., “Reluctant Democratization: The Case of the Justice and Development Party in Turkey”, *Constellations*, 2013, Vol. 20, no. 2, p. 312-327.

<sup>350</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 320.

violations: the criminalization of dissenting opinions; arbitrary limits on the freedom of assembly; prosecutions against political opposition based on vague anti-terrorism laws and in violation of fair trial standards; ill treatment of protesters; and vulnerable persons by the police and the massive incarceration of journalists.”<sup>351</sup> However, this is not fully in line with the EU Progress Reports that followed Turkey in both legislative reforms and their implementation. The Progress Report, as was disclosed in the next chapter, indicate that the reform momentum of the AKP continued, albeit frequently inconsistently, until 2011.

A similar perspective argues that by winning consecutive elections and bringing stability to Turkey, the AKP has turned the country into a key economic and political actor in world politics. Regarding domestic politics, this perspective also evaluates the rule of AKP in two periods: While the first period is determined by the struggle between the AKP and secularist establishment, the AKP governments have exercised thorough transformations that spanned from neoliberal economic growth to foreign policy activism. In the second period, which starts with the consolidation of the Party’s hegemonic position in Turkey’s power structure, the AKP gave up its reformist agenda and retreated on the axis of democratization.<sup>352</sup> Taking consolidation of electoral hegemony as the turning point is particularly important as it lays the emphasis on power relations.

The overall transformation that Turkey has gone through can also be framed as devolution *from tutelary democracy to competitive authoritarianism*<sup>353</sup> and placed in the context of global retreat from democracy, trust in state institutions and rule of law. While tutelary democracy represents the political heritage that Turkey had before the AKP rule, competitive authoritarianism represents the point where the Party took the country through *free yet unfair elections*. Considering neo-patrimonialism as its management of economy, populism as its electoral strategy and Islamism-infused-conservatism as its political ideology, the regime crafted by the AKP in its authoritarian turn can also be framed as *electoral authoritarianism*<sup>354</sup>. The Party’s extreme dislike of participation in between the elections through means of political opposition, media and civil society, and its identification of

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<sup>351</sup>Bakiner Onur, “How Did We Get Here? Turkey’s Slow Shift to Authoritarianism”, *Authoritarian Politics in Turkey*, Başer Bahar, Öztürk Erdi A. (eds.), London, IB Tauris, 2017, p. 27-28.

<sup>352</sup>Keyman Fuat, Gümüşçü Şebnem, “Democracy, Identity, and Foreign Policy in Turkey: *Hegemony through Transformation*”, Berlin, PalgraveMacmillan, 2014, p. 30.

<sup>353</sup>Esen Berk, Gümüşçü Şebnem, “Rising Competitive Authoritarianism in Turkey”, *Third World Quarterly*, 2016, vol. 37, no. 9., p. 1581-1606.

<sup>354</sup>Yılmaz İhsan, Bashirov Galib, “The AKP after 15 years: emergence of Erdoganism in Turkey”, *Third World Quarterly*, 2018, vol. 39, no. 9, p. 1812-1830.

elections as the sole means of legitimacy justify the juxtaposition of elections with authoritarianism.

This thesis offers a detailed periodization for AKP's transformation across the whole Second Part through Party's practice of securitization and de-securitization. Focusing on both "how" and "why" securitization is exercised, this thesis examines how the discourse, policies and alliance of the Party changed throughout its transformation. Securitization practices in these periods will be traced through, a) *strategic aims and gains*, b) *construction of threat conceptions*, c) *target groups*, d) *discourses and orientations*. After the evaluations made under the light of these parameters, this study offers 5 stages in AKP's transformation: 1) 2002-2007: *EU-Access Reforms and Co-Habitation with Secularist Establishment* (De-Securitization), 2) 2007-2011: *Consolidation of Power and Disarticulation of Secularist Establishment* (Non-securitization), 3) 2011-2016: *Formation of Hegemony through "Assertive Conservatism"* (Re-Securitization), 4) 2016-2021: *Systemic Domination* (Intense Re-Securitization)

## Chapter 1

### The Period of De-securitization and Co-habitation with Secularist Establishment (2002-2007)

*“He who knows when he can fight and when he cannot will be victorious”*

*Sun Tzu*

Through the politics of fusion explained in Part 1, the AKP attempted to bring all its potential voters together in the conservative-religious clusters of Turkish politics. In this effort the AKP elite did not have to re-invent the wheel, because Turkish centre-right had an established tradition of culturally conservative, economically liberal and Islam-friendly politics and as such, it stood as fertile grounds for the newly founded party. Yet, to establish itself as a new venue for both Islamist and conservative politics, the AKP elite had to start with reaffirming their detachment from National Outlook Movement (NOM) politics. In May 2003, Erdoğan underlined this detachment and going further, he indicated another address for the political identity of the AKP: “Among us, there may be people with different prior political affiliations. But, we have left our prior gear outside. We are the continuation of Democrat Party and we embrace 70 million”<sup>355</sup>. Four points can be inferred from this speech: 1- DP is used safely because it has no direct and official continuation after 1960 despite the presence of various centre right parties. Therefore, another party is used without any identity crisis. 2- With “different prior political affiliations” he primarily refers to former NOM politics with which he was also affiliated, yet does not refer to it explicitly to maintain ties with the NOM voters and secure their votes. 3- He refers to political identity in terms of clothing style, which gives hints about the position and status that he attributes to political identities. In practical terms, this positioning implies that he may use political ideologies without internalizing them. 4- Juxtaposing the DP inheritance with embracing 70 million, the whole Turkish population, connotes that the centre-right politics of DP embraces the whole population. Therefore, this connotation carries traces of populism beyond Turkish centre-right. Interestingly, in the same speech where he identified the AKP as the continuation of DP, Erdoğan also said: “the AKP is not the predecessor, follow up or continuation of any other party” in a clear contradiction.

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<sup>355</sup>See for details: <https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/akp-lideri-erdogan-dpnin-devamiyiz-147213>, last accessed on 23.03.2020.

Existing conditions of Turkey and the opportunity space that the AKP utilized to come to power necessitated a delicate balance under an effective leadership. “Communicating with the people in the language of conservatism, extending the hand of compromise to the Kemalist governing elites with emphatic allegiance to the principle of secularism, and approaching the West by championing the cause of EU membership all require a careful balancing by a strong leadership that should exhibit features of independent strategic reasoning...”<sup>356</sup> The search and practice of such a balance shaped the first years of the AKP government and increased its legitimacy before the Turkish public and secularist establishment as well as influential Western actors.

### **2.1. Consolidation through Moderation**

Having a strong enough popular support to form a single party government in the first election it joined, the AKP’s initial strategies focused on non-confrontation and co-habitation with the secularist elite. Considering the closures of previous NOM parties, from where most of the founding elite of the AKP came, and recent imprisonment of Erdoğan by the establishment, it renders reasonable that the main strategy of the Party was based on an existential risk assessment and its avoidance for initial years. Regarding this assessment, “the JDP has developed a three-layered strategy; first, adopt a language of human rights and democracy as a discursive shield; second, mobilize popular support as a form of democratic legitimacy; and third, build a liberal-democratic coalition with modern/secular sectors that recognize the JDP as a legitimate political actor.”<sup>357</sup> With this strategy, the Party aimed at levelling the political playground which had previously been tilted by the secularist bureaucracy at the cost of elected governments, and expanding it for itself. While the conditions before the 2002 elections posed an *opportunity space* for the AKP, levelling the playground stood as a *necessity space*. Without utilizing it, the Party would not be able to establish a sustainable power position as an elected government. The bureaucratic tutelage of the secularist establishment must have been disarticulated for civilian democratic rule, and as the developments in its two-decade-rule indicates, this necessity space would shape the AKP’s democratic credentials.

On the other hand, the timing was of the essence for dissolving, detaching and removing the establishment from high bureaucracy. Until the Party consolidates enough

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<sup>356</sup>Yıldız Ahmet (2008), *ibid.* p. 43.

<sup>357</sup>Dağı İhsan, “The Justice and Development Party: Identity, Politics and Human Rights Discourse in the Search for Security and Legitimacy”, Yavuz M. Hakan, (Ed), *The Emergence of a New Turkey: Islam, Democracy, and the AK Parti*, Utah University Press, Utah, 2006, p. 89.

power for such a disarticulation it employed a *strategy of non-confrontation* with the bureaucratic establishment of Turkey who share a secularist mindset and use their power positions to repress the groups and individuals that they perceive as threat. AKP's leadership mostly consisted of former Islamists whose political parties were shut down multiple times by the establishment and they were in full realization of the fact that in a confrontation with the establishment at the beginning of their government they would not stand much chance for survival.

AKP leadership's re-orientation in centre-right and their emphasis on reconciliation are strongly relevant to avoiding such a confrontation. In a speech at International Symposium of Conservative Democracy that was organized by AKP Erdoğan presented the details about the political identity of his Party. "AK Party (AKP) builds itself on a conservatism that promotes an understanding that is open to innovation, rather than defending the status quo...According to the democratic conservatism of the AK Party, politics is a realm of reconciliation...When tolerated, social and cultural differences may contribute to the colours of political realm...AK Party believes that radical discourses and styles of politics do not do any good to Turkish politics. Politics in Turkey must be built on reconciliation, unity and tolerance, rather than conflict and polarization. It also believes that being moderate is a clear societal demand."<sup>358</sup> Here, Erdoğan was well aware of the fact that status quo did not bear many positive elements after an unstable decade preceding the AKP rule and negated it easily. However, in line with the overall stance of his Party in its first term in government (2002-2007), Erdoğan avoids confrontation and employs a reconciliatory language to define and position the AKP.

The elements of "justice" and "development" in the naming of the Party primarily reflect the inspirations of peripheral masses who felt excluded by the Republican centre. The name of the Party calls for *justice* for those who had been ostracized by the secularist centre and were deprived of full representation and exploitation of the opportunities of public space. *Development* voices their desire for a better life in terms of income level and overall living standards. Secondarily and in a broader sense, both concepts were somewhat relevant to demands of voters from every political walk in Turkey especially after a decade of economic and political instability and widespread corruption.

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<sup>358</sup>See for details of his speech at the Symposium: <https://www.milliyet.com.tr/gundem/erdogan-dini-sembollele-orgutlenmeyi-dogru-bulmuyoruz-5127715>, last accessed on 25.03.2020.

With the above statements, Erdoğan distances himself from NOM politics where he rose as a political figure, and emphasizes that they have no agenda of fundamental transformation of state and society. These statements aim at removing the concerns in the eyes of the bureaucratic establishment and among the social groups that do not support the AKP. When Erbakan, who was Erdoğan's leader and mentor in NOM politics, came to power he had mentioned *whether the change in Turkey would be bloody or not*<sup>359</sup> 6 years ago, alarming the secularist establishment and eventually walking a path that ended with the closure of his party. Erdoğan had learned from the mistakes of his leader and was determined not to repeat the same mistakes.

In his book, "AKP and Conservative Democracy" (*Ak Parti ve Muhafazakar Demokrasi*), Yalçın Akdoğan, Erdoğan's former advisor and Parliament member from the AKP, identifies AKP's political positioning as follows: "The identification of the AKP as conservative democracy, comes from the necessity of framing the Party's identity in universal standards, which is a prerequisite for political structuring that enables the spirit of democracy and removes the polarizations and tensions that defined Turkish politics."<sup>360</sup> Upon winning the elections in 2002, Erdoğan accepted the presence of similarities between Christian democrat parties of Europe and AKP and underlined that they both emphasize family, tradition and morality in an interview that he gave to German daily, Die Welt. In the interview, he highlighted: "We represent a large mainstream conservative and democrat portion of the society in Turkey. We are univocal on this. There are no radicals among us."<sup>361</sup> He also mentioned that they would prove the possibility of coexistence between Islam and democracy in the interview. Thus, it could fairly be claimed that there was an observable consistency between the messages that he delivered in Turkey and outside the country. It can also be inferred that there was a significant intra-party discipline with the emphasis on the Party being univocal.

In the speech where he negated the presence of radicals within the Party, Erdoğan framed his recently centralized position as follows: "Departing from its tradition, our party wants to reproduce the deeply rooted local value system (of Turkey) in line with the universal

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<sup>359</sup>Welfare Party's leader Necmettin Erbakan's words when he came to power in 1996 had created huge concern not only at judicio-military centers of bureaucratic tutelage but also in his civilian dissidence. The expressions were later used in the indictments of the closure case of Welfare Party. The issue is debated in detail in First Part of the thesis.

<sup>360</sup>Akdoğan Yalçın, *Ak Parti ve Muhafazakar Demokrasi*, İstanbul, Ak Parti Publications, 2003, p. vii.

<sup>361</sup>See for details: <https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/erdogan-aramizda-radikal-yok-38428172>, last accessed on 29.03.2020.

standards of conservatism”. As the expression, “deeply rooted value system” implies a singular set of values, there has been no mention of moral plurality stemming from the historically formed diversity of Turkish society. Obviously he sees the society as a monolithic entity that functions through the same moral code or rather he chooses to see this way. Another founding figure of the AKP, and the right hand of Erdoğan back in time, Abdullah Gül, positions the AKP in the representation of *mainstream* Turkish society as it embraced the values of Turkey. Gül also acknowledges that conservatism, by its very nature, involves religion, history, tradition and culture.<sup>362</sup> Expressions of both Erdoğan and Gül position the AKP in a typical centre-right orientation that had rendered ineffective throughout the 1990s and created an opportunity space for the AKP leadership. In brief, the opportunity space was clearly recognized and effectively utilized by the Party leadership.

All things considered, with moderation and strategic positioning in conservative democracy, the AKP aimed to create legitimacy among three target groups; a) Turkish voters, through responding to their demands in the framework of their politico-cultural sensitivities, b) Western public, through using political concepts that are more agreeable to them, and c) secularist bureaucracy, through consistently rejecting the alleged affiliation with political Islam.<sup>363</sup> With this positioning the AKP has declared that it recognized the preferences and sensitivities of the secularist establishment in terms of secularism, Western power centres in terms of embracing democracy and secularism, and conservative Turkish voter, in terms of protection against the oppression of secularist establishment. Doing this, the Party did not lose the Islamist (NOM) voter because NOM voter had the consent for the implicit compromise of the AKP with the secularist establishment, according to which, they would get religious freedom in return for embracing Turkish secular system.

## **2.2. 2004 Local Elections: *The First Electoral Test in Power***

2004 local elections set up the first electoral response for the AKP from Turkish electorate. The AKP joined the elections with a momentum created by several factors: First, the leader of the Party, Tayyip Erdoğan, had emerged with his success as the municipal mayor of Istanbul, so he knew local politics very well. Second, the central government was run by the AKP, which provides advantages to the Party in local politics and is perceived as such by the electorate. Third, AKP’s service oriented politics and its success in the management of

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<sup>362</sup>Mentioned in Koyuncu Büke, *Benim Milletim: Ak Parti İktidarı, Din ve Ulusal Kimlik*, İstanbul, İletişim Publications, 2014, p. 76.

<sup>363</sup>Yıldız Ahmet (2008), *ibid.* p. 45.



economy had created credibility for the AKP in public.<sup>364</sup> Service oriented policy is designated as an alternative to identity politics, and was mostly represented by centre-right with a developmentalist mindset in Turkey. Coming from NOM tradition, it makes sense that the AKP establishes itself as a service oriented party because it needed to persuade the centre right voter that it would not follow Islamist politics.

In recognition of its multi-character voter base, the AKP followed a carefully crafted strategy. While the Party leadership endorsed a conservative agenda without voicing any Islamist concern, 80% of the nominees of the Party at the local elections came from Islamist background. Therefore, the AKP had provided opportunities of rent at the local level to its still-Islamist voter while maintaining its overall conservative discourse and appealing to conservative voter. There was a general increase in conservative votes<sup>365</sup> from 63% in 2002 general elections to 70% in 2004 local elections, 41.8% of which was given to the AKP (8% more than its share in the general elections of 2002).<sup>366</sup> As the increase in the conservative votes came through the AKP, the elections indicated that the AKP was enhancing its voter base including the ones that came from non-conservative segments.

In the election campaign of AKP in 2004, “Erdoğan was positioned in the background and was not at the centre of the election campaign, as the 2004 election campaign was a local election... and the messages of the AK Party were not taken from Erdoğan but from the perspective of corporate identity”<sup>367</sup> Upon the election victory Erdoğan addressed his supporters from the balcony of AKP headquarters and emphasized stability.<sup>368</sup> Stability was a central concept of AKP’s political communication in its first period in response to the demand of the voter. Emphasis on stability and avoidance of identity politics brought the support of Kurdish voter as well, especially from urban middle classes. Recognition of Kurdish issue, responding to the cultural demands of Kurds, -be it partially- and following a service-oriented policy and discourse paid off as an increasing electoral support from the Kurdish voter. All

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<sup>364</sup> Baykal Ahmet, Erciyas Serencan, “2004’ten 2019’a Yerel Seçimler”, *Kriter*, 2018, vol. 29. Available here: <https://kriterdergi.com/dosya-ak-parti-ve-yerel-yonetimler/2004ten-2019a-yerel-secimler>, last accessed on 1.06.2020.

<sup>365</sup> The increase in the shares of conservative parties may be regarded as the counter-balancing of the secularist intervention of 28 February 1997 by the voter. The intervention seems to have further mobilized conservatives who felt disenfranchised by the intervention.

<sup>366</sup> Çağaptay Soner, Çongar Yasemin, “Local Elections in Turkey: A Landslide Victory for the Incumbent AKP”, Washington Institute, 2004. Available here: <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/local-elections-in-turkey-a-landslide-victory-for-the-incumbent-akp>, last accessed on 01.06.2020.

<sup>367</sup> Göksu Oğuz, “Ak Parti’nin Seçim Stratejileri ve Siyasal Kampanyaları: 2002-2014 Dönemi Analizi”, *Turkish Studies Social Sciences*, 2019, vol.14, no. 3, p. 589-621.

<sup>368</sup> Sözcü, *Erdoğan’ın Balkon Konuşmaları*, (Balcony Speeches of Erdoğan), 2017, available here: <https://www.sozcu.com.tr/2017/gundem/erdoganin-balkon-konusmalari-1803523/>, last accessed 01.06.2020.

things considered, 2004 local elections can be regarded as the first step of AKP's consolidation in power.

### **2.3. 2007: *The Year of Crisis Management***

#### **2.3.1. Presidential Elections, E-Memorandum, 367 Crisis and Republic Protests**

As the tenure of the President Sezer would end in May 2007, there would be Presidential election and the Presidents were elected in Parliament by the votes of deputies by then. On April 24, Erdoğan officially nominated Abdullah Gül, his long comrade and second man of the Party, for Presidency. On April 27 the elections were held and Gül won 357 votes out of 550 deputies. In 2007 Turkish Constitution stipulated that the President is elected by the votes of two third of the deputies<sup>369</sup> and with simple majority. AKP would easily secure two third of the deputies (275+1), yet the presence of 367 deputies in the election was a precondition. The precondition on the presence of 367 deputies was brought to the fore months before the election by former Chief Public Prosecutor, Sabih Kanadođlu. Two small parties of the centre-right that were dwarfed by the AKP; ANAP and DYP, boycotted the election and the AKP did not secure 367 deputies in the voting process. CHP applied the Constitutional Court for the nullification of the election results for the violation of the precondition and the Court cancelled the results.<sup>370</sup> The high judiciary wing of the secularist establishment had intervened using the legal procedures and prevented the presidency of Abdullah Gül for the time being.

Then the military wing of the establishment entered the election environment in an attempt to exercise influence. Yaşar Büyükanıt, then the Chief of General Staff, organized a press meeting in April, 2007 and reminding the President being the Commander in Chief of the TAF (Turkish Armed Forces), he said, "The President must be loyal to secularism in the essence not just on paper". This was a clear warning to the government not to nominate anyone conservative for Presidency. Presidency, both as a symbol and as much as its executive power goes was seen as the last stronghold for the secularist camp against the conservatives. After two days, Atatürkist Thought Association, a hardliner secularist NGO organized mass protests called Republic Protests, which were also attended by President Sezer and CHP

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<sup>369</sup> See the details of the amendments on the then Turkish Constitution on the Official Gazette: <https://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/eskiler/2007/06/20070616-1.htm>, last accessed On 02.06.2020.

<sup>370</sup> YeniŞafak, *Halkın Demokrasi Dersi: 2007 Anayasa Referandumu*, YeniŞafak, available at <https://www.yenisafak.com/secim-referandum-2007>, last accessed on 02.06.2020.

chairman Deniz Baykal alongside minor political parties<sup>371</sup>. Taking side in a politically divisive matter, Sezer violated the Constitution on his position as President which was then stipulated as “impartial and above partisan politics”<sup>372</sup> After the protests General Büyükanıt said; “Turkish society took my message, whoever did not, has a problem with perception”.<sup>373</sup> Message here refers to the Republic Protests with the implication that it was TAF that spearheaded the seemingly civilian protests.

Another indication of TAF’s leadership position in the secularist camp is that the Protests that it spearheaded was attended by the President, CHP chairman and other small secularist parties. President Sezer delivered a speech at the Academy of War on the day of the first protests and said; “Regime has never been under threat to this extent...TAF is under attack from within and without...External powers want to replace the secular Republic with a state of Moderate Islam.”<sup>374</sup> Sezer’s clear reference to external powers implicitly targets the AKP, which, in Sezer’s speech is implied as the collaborator of the external powers. Moderate Islam that is portrayed as a threat is another reference to the AKP in President’s speech. All things considered, the secularist camp was in the field *pressing full court* against the AKP with the state institutions that it controlled such as TAF, high judiciary and even Presidency, and the civilian organs that it influenced.

The AKP did not back down from the pressure and in a couple days, officially nominated Abdullah Gül for President against the message of the establishment. The other parties stood no chance since the AKP dominated the Parliament with 363 deputies out of 550. Gül’s wife wore headscarf, which was a symbolic win for the conservatives and loss for the secularists. Gül avoided loading such a symbolic message to headscarf and tried to de-escalate the tension saying: “Headscarf is an individual right for my wife”. The Election Day, April 27, was loaded with many events: As Gül obtained 357 votes (10 short of precondition of 367), CHP chairman applied to the Constitutional Court for cancellation.

The establishment’s reaction to the nomination of Gül came in a memorandum which was posted on the website of General Staff. It claimed to observe particular activities in the country that “wore out secularism” and added: “It should be born in mind that in these debates

<sup>371</sup>BirGün, *Cumhuriyet Mitingi Yapıldı*, (Republic Protests were Held), 2007, available here: <https://www.birgun.net/haber/cumhuriyet-mitingi-yapildi-32868>, last accessed on 02.06.2020.

<sup>372</sup>Gönenç Levent, *Partili Cumhurbaşkanı*, (Partisan President), 2017, available here: [https://www.tepav.org.tr/upload/files/1496411769-5.Partili\\_Cumhurbaskani.pdf](https://www.tepav.org.tr/upload/files/1496411769-5.Partili_Cumhurbaskani.pdf), last accessed On 02.06.2020.

<sup>373</sup> See Büyükanıt’s remarks here in the chronology of the crisis: <https://www.ntv.com.tr/galeri/turkiye/e-muhtiranin-kronolojisi.0Sl6nw7mM0iKqufp3XMd6w/sq8YX0WYAEmTVukKCv-n7g>

<sup>374</sup>

(about secularism), TAF is a party and it is the absolute defender of secularism”<sup>375</sup> The memorandum also drew lines of resemblance between the “activities that wore out secularism” and Kurdish secessionism. In all practical terms the TAF intervened into Presidential elections yet eventually failed to prevent Abdullah Gül becoming the President. The failure indicated the intervention capacity of TAF into civilian politics in the presence of a strong government. It also disclosed the limits of secularist politics in Turkey that despite pressing full court and speaking a narrative of securitization with TAF, high judiciary and Presidency, it failed to prevent the nomination and eventual election of Abdullah Gül.

On the face of a strained political process Erdoğan employed a discourse of de-escalation of tension. Addressing the nation on April 30, 2007, he said, “All that we have is love and there is a need for refreshing the atmosphere of trust”. De-escalation was strategically correct for the AKP that in any election, its candidate would win, so the AKP leadership played into the normalization of the process. The next day, Minister of Justice and spokesperson of the government made a press declaration and said: “MGK is subordinate to the government and Prime Minister and any anti-government speech is unthinkable in a democratic regime...The primary protector of the fundamental values of the state...Our government is determined to protect democracy.”<sup>376</sup> Delegitimizing the memorandum, Çiçek reminded the subordinate Constitutional role of TAF and presented the AKP government as a potent democratic power. On May 3 both Condeleezza Rice, the Secretary of State of the U.S. and Ollie Rehn, EU commissioner for enlargement sided with the AKP and said that TAF should respect the results of the democratic process and not intervene into it.<sup>377</sup> The secularist establishment had further deteriorated its relations with Western countries while the AKP further consolidated its power as legitimate elected government on the face of an interfering bureaucratic establishment.

### **2.3.2. *Ergenekon* Trials and 2007 General Elections**

In the election process, the AKP was not able to get Abdullah Gül elected as President out of the precondition of 367 the AKP opted for early elections, which were designated to be held on July 22 2007. In the run up of the elections the Party took an indirect yet rather bold manoeuvre against the establishment, which came in the form a legal counter attack. On June

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<sup>375</sup> Mynet, 27 Nisan E-Muhtırası Tam Metni, (Full Text of April 27 E-Memorandum), Mynet, 2015, available here: <https://www.mynet.com/27-nisan-e-muhtirasi-tam-metni-110102212559>, last accessed on 02.06.2020.

<sup>376</sup> See the full speech at: <https://www.dailymotion.com/video/xvhrbx>, last accessed on 02.06.2020.

<sup>377</sup> Available here: <https://www.ntv.com.tr/galeri/turkiye/e-muhtiranin-kronolojisi,0Sl6nw7mM0iKqufp3XMd6w/sq8YX0WYAEmTVukKcV-n7g>, last accessed on 02.06.2020.

12 2007, police raided a house in Ümraniye district of Istanbul upon an anonymous call and found hand grenades and C4 explosives. This raid was later regarded as the milestone for the case against the alleged presence of an organized paramilitary network called *Ergenekon*. “The network was said to have been linked to the "deep state", hardliner secularists in key areas of the Turkish establishment who are believed to have wielded considerable influence in political life in recent decades.”<sup>378</sup> The allegation for the *Ergenekon* was that they had been preparing for provocative activities that would destabilize the country and oust the democratically elected government from power. Accusations involved a broad range of persons spanning from former Chief of General Staff İlker Başbuğ to crime boss Sedat Peker.

For the analysis of AKP’s first term that spans between 2002 and 2007, the *Ergenekon* renders important for two reasons: First, it signifies AKP’s pushback on the secularist establishment, specifically on TAF, after surviving the April memorandum. The pushback demonstrates a clear increase of confidence in terms of consolidation of power for the AKP. Second, it publicized the alliance between the AKP and Gülen Movement<sup>379</sup> who were actually “leading the hunt against *Ergenekon* - both at the law and order level and in the media - were supporters of prominent exiled cleric Fethullah Gülen... Oversight of the Ümraniye weapons stash case was handed to public prosecutor Zekeriya Öz, a well-known Gülenist, who became the public face of the investigation and prosecution of *Ergenekon* suspects.”<sup>380</sup> As the case would later develop further and take unexpected turns, it is examined in detail in the following parts of the thesis, thus, it should suffice to underline for now that it was a strategic move that contributed to AKP’s election success in 2007.

As a politician who has always taken the quantitative data into account since his mayoral times in Istanbul<sup>381</sup>, Erdoğan was well aware of the fact that his support had increased since 2002. Thus, he opted for early elections as a solution to the conundrum of Presidential election, with which the Party refreshed the public support and manifested its persistence and determination, and got Abdullah Gül elected as President. Having the President from within the Party would break the bureaucratic siege for the AKP and bear a symbolic victory since the President is also the Commander in Chief of TAF.

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<sup>378</sup> Al Jazeera, *Timeline: Turkey's 'Ergenekon' Trial*, Al Jazeera, 2013, available here: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/europe/2013/08/20138512358195978.html>

<sup>379</sup> Gülen Movement is a frequently debated civic movement in Turkey in the context of the developments of the last decade. As it becomes socio-politically relevant in the next chapter, it is examined in detail there.

<sup>380</sup> MacDonald Alex, *Ergenekon: The bizarre case that shaped modern Turkey*, Middle East Eye, 2019, available here: <https://www.middleeasteye.net/big-story/ergenekon-trials-turkey-gulen>, last accessed on 03.06.2020.

<sup>381</sup> Selvi Abdulkadir, *Anketler Konuşuyor*, (Polls Speak up), Hürriyet, 2018, last accessed on 03.06.2020.

The 2007 election manifesto of AKP expressed the continuance of the policy of services through the words of Atatürk: “There is no becoming master to the nation, there is only becoming its servants”. It also mentioned “2023 targets” referring to the centennial anniversary of the Republic implying a centralist orientation for the Party with no intention to get involved in a war of symbols with the secularist establishment and the voter. The basis of the declaration is identified as “to uplift our people, develop our country and empower our state”<sup>382</sup>, which indicates a political mindset shaped by *right wing developmentalism*. The manifesto also promised to accelerate reforms on the protection of basic rights and freedoms, and pledged further democratization through promotion of transparency and intra-party democracy.<sup>383</sup> Expectedly, moving towards the centre was not devoid of adverse effects, for example, the Kurdish issue was not mentioned in the manifesto even in an indirect manner.

The main slogan of 2007 election was “*There is no stopping for us, move forward*” complemented with, “*We succeeded together, do not leave it incomplete!*”, “*Everything for Turkey*”, “*Enough, decision belongs to the nation*” and “*One state, one country, one flag, one nation*”. As an effective orator, Erdoğan created a habit of making the crowd chant these slogans with him. Moreover, he sang a famous classic Turkish song “We walked together on these roads, got wet under the same rain” implying a strong bond with the electorate.<sup>384</sup> While the first two slogans capitalized on the Party’s success in its first period, the last two demonstrated centre-right populism. The last one was almost a complete replica of Democrat Party’s (DP) slogan in 1950, in the first election of multi-party system through which it won against CHP and the secularist establishment. The AKP’s initial identification with the DP in contra-establishment manifested itself in its election slogans that were used in a consistent campaign.<sup>385</sup> The election strategy of the AKP was built on the recognition and recapturing of its success and continuance of its momentum. The Party had successfully owned the concepts of stability and growth not only with its economic performance but also with the successful management of political crises that it had with the establishment.

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<sup>382</sup> Ak Parti, *Seçim Beyannamesi* (Election Manifesto), 2007, p. 4. Available here: <http://www.akparti.org.tr/media/272213/2007-2007-secim-beyannamesi-ozet.pdf>, last accessed on 04.06.2020.

<sup>383</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6-7.

<sup>384</sup> See some examples of these slogans from the 2007 election rally of the AKP: Malatya rally at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4LE-aMiT\\_P8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4LE-aMiT_P8), Batman rally at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F--kaXbC1GQ>, Adiyaman rally at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gp2V-fs4Mos>, Tokat rally at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BmBuofRnSr4>, last accessed on 04.06.2020.

<sup>385</sup> See examples of visuals at AKP’s website: <https://www.akparti.org.tr/galeriler/foto-galeriler/2007-genel-secimleri-01-temmuz/#videoGallery-16>, last accessed on 04.06.2020.



In an election speech on the state-run television channel, Erdoğan capitalized on concepts like “giant leap forward”, “security and stability”, “strong government-strong Turkey” identifying all of them with his leadership. Underlining the positive language that the AKP employed, he asked “Will you choose hope or scary scenarios?” referring the latter to the fear mongering efforts of the secularist establishment. He also underlined the policy of service, rather policy of identity through the slogan; “Best way to love one’s country goes through serving it”.<sup>386</sup>

All things considered, the AKP joined the 2007 election<sup>387</sup> with a clear upper hand and won it with 46.7%, with more than 12% increase since 2002 elections. Yet the party won fewer seats (341) in the Parliament since MHP also passed the 10% election threshold and entered the Parliament. The election was a clear sign of consolidation of power for the AKP in electoral terms which represents a turning point for both sides of the power struggle. While this victory meant a fairer political space that is shaped by competitive elections for the conservatives (and liberal luminaries), it marked further retreat for the secularists.<sup>388</sup> All in all, the developments in 2007 have changed the configuration of power in Turkey in fundamental ways. The secularist bloc that involved TAF, high judiciary, Presidency, political parties and civil organisations have pressed full court, yet lost the power struggle.<sup>389</sup>

#### **2.4. Institutional Non-Confrontationalism**

Since the interventions into civilian politics have been conducted by *Turkish Armed Forces* (TAF) and the party closure cases have been opened and decided by *Supreme Court of Appeals* and *Constitutional Court* respectively, these three major institutions posed potential threats to the sustainability of the AKP rule, as Repressive State Apparatuses (RSAs). AKP came to power 5 years after the last military intervention (1997) and one year after the closure of the Virtue Party (2001), from where most of the AKP elite came. Both traumas, therefore, were still very fresh on the memories of the AKP leadership and they acted to avoid

<sup>386</sup> See the election propaganda of Erdoğan on TRT 1 here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P7hIAVhFBZs>, last accessed on 04.06.2020. As the primary state-run television channel TRT 1 allocates equal time to the leaders of the parties that join the elections on the eve of the election as a last speech before the propaganda ban starts.

<sup>387</sup> See for details of 2007 elections: <https://secim.haberler.com/2007/>, last accessed on 04.06.2020.

<sup>388</sup> Çarkoğlu Ali, *A New Electoral Victory for the ‘Pro-Islamists’ or the ‘New Centre-Right’? The Justice and Development Party Phenomenon in the July 2007 Parliamentary Elections in Turkey*, *South European Society and Politics*, 2007, vol. 12, no. 4, p. 501-519.

<sup>389</sup> Birand, M. A., *2007 AKP'nin Yılı Oldu* (2007 has been the Year of the AKP), available here: <https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/2007-akp-nin-yili-oldu-7916238>, last accessed on 18.05.2020.

confrontations with all these three RSAs. In the process of 1997 “post-modern coup” the TAF had invited the members of Supreme Court of Appeals and Council of State (*Danıştay*) to its headquarters and gave briefings about the state of affairs of Islamic backwardness (*irtica*)<sup>390</sup>, and therefore indicated its sovereign position in bureaucratic tutelage. Given this tutelary position of TAF, the AKP had to acknowledge the sensitivities of the Army and conduct its politics in a reconciliatory manner to prevent any antagonistic encounter with it.

Erdoğan has taken a pro-active discursive stance in AKP’s relations with the TAF from the very beginning. Just 2 days after the AKP won the elections; he was asked whether he was going to warn the TAF to remain in the barracks. In his response, Erdoğan has reset the polarizing context of the question and answered: “The duties of state institutions are clearly stated in our Constitution. This is our Army, and the apple of our eyes. We do not want anyone between us and the Army.”<sup>391</sup>In this rather careful statement, Erdoğan gave signals of his newly elected government’s attitude towards avoiding the antagonistic relations with the Army, yet, he also mentioned the Constitutional constraints placed on the Army. In another statement that he gave in Davos in January 2003, Erdoğan underlined that “there have been voids in civilian politics in the past and the Army filled the void. Yet there is, now, a strong civilian government.”<sup>392</sup>In the same speech, he acknowledged the founding role that the Turkish Army had in the Republican history, yet drew its limits saying, “Politics represents a higher position. Army is among the institutions that are subordinate to politics.”

Four major factors placed restraint on TAF’s capacity to intervene into daily politics: First, the voters had given a strong mandate that to the AKP (67% of the seats in the Parliament)<sup>393</sup>. The trust and support that the AKP leadership obtained from the society had unsettled the established pattern of government-TAF relations that positioned less-than-consolidated governments that executed the daily politics at the backdrop of a strong military that remained above political criticism yet intervened when it saw fit. Second, TAF suffered internal-institutional and external-systemic hindrances when the AKP came to power. Institutionally, not all the high ranking officers favoured military interventions to keep the country on the track of modernization that was set in the initial decades of the Republic. Many

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<sup>390</sup>See for details: <https://www.sabah.com.tr/galeri/turkiye/iste-28-subatin-utanc-mansetleri-bunlari-yazmislardi/10>, last accessed on 02.05.2020.

<sup>391</sup>See for details: <https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/orduyla-aramiza-kimse-girmesin-107666>, last accessed on 02.05.2020.

<sup>392</sup>See for details: <https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/dunya/siyasetteki-boslugu-bazen-ordu-doldurdu-123843>, last accessed on 02.05.2020.

<sup>393</sup>See for details: <https://www.haberturk.com/secim2002>, last accessed on 04.05.2020.



of them believed that previous traumatic interventions rendered counterproductive and acknowledging the mandate of the elected officials represented a better way for attaining the standards of contemporary civilisations.<sup>394</sup>In terms of systemic position, despite still being perceived as the most trusted state institution in early 2000s<sup>395</sup>, the TAF had lost the support of the left wing politics because of 1971 and 1980 interventions, and conservatives because of 1997 intervention. Third, the rise of conservative provincial bourgeoisie called Anatolian Tigers enabled the establishment of media outlets and educational institutions that facilitated a socio-political conscience among conservative masses and diversified their access to knowledge.<sup>396</sup> Fourth, as Turkey became a candidate state for European Union in 1999, the process of de-securitization started intensifying, and as the security concerns started to be downplayed, the role of TAF in domestic politics started to shrink. Strategic instrumentalization of EU access reforms by the AKP further minimized the political space that TAF enjoyed. After a reform package (Seventh Harmonization Package) was made into law by the AKP dominated Turkish Parliament, the structure of MGK, the organ that TAF uses for intervention into politics, was changed in favour of civilian politics. The secretary-general of MGK was designated to be a civilian and the decisions of the institution were downgraded to the status of recommendations to the elected government and it lost its enforcement capacity.<sup>397</sup>With a strategy of patience and non-confrontation, the AKP had started replacing the key positions of the establishment with its own personnel.

## **2.5. Contention with the Secularist Establishment over Lifestyle and Identity Issues**

Avoiding then-potentially-fatal collisions with the secularist bureaucracy, the AKP had positioned itself as a party that brings effective solutions rather than identity politics.<sup>398</sup> Yet, it has never disclosed the underpinning reasons of this new positioning and therefore, failed in removing the deeply entrenched suspicions of the secularist camp. Assuming strong lines of continuity from the NOM politics, the secularists believed that the Party had a hidden agenda and was waiting to get strong enough to disclose the real one. Yet, the doubtful stance of the establishment was not purely built on ideological dispute. It would rather be fair to

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<sup>394</sup>Aydınlı Ersel, "Civil-Military Relations Transformed", *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 23, no. 1, 2008, p. 100-108.

<sup>395</sup>See for details: <https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/akp-anketi-en-guvenilir-kurum-ordu-289761>, last accessed on 07.05.2020.

<sup>396</sup>Aydınlı Ersel (2008), *ibid.*, p. 103.

<sup>397</sup>Bardakçı Mehmet, "Coup Plots and the Transformation of Civil-Military Relations in Turkey under AKP Rule", *Turkish Studies*, 2013, vol. 14, no. 2, p. 411-428.

<sup>398</sup>Yavuz M. Hakan, "The Transformation of a Turkish Islamic Movement: From Identity Politics to Policy", *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences*, vol. 22, p. 105-111.

argue that the establishment created deliberate tension in a strategic manner to provoke and radicalize the AKP, which would facilitate the securitization of the Party and prevent its normalization in power.

However, the secularist suspicion about the change that the AKP built itself on was not devoid of substance. “First, the change was so abrupt and therefore it was taken as a cosmetic change in the image rather than anything fundamental...Second, it remained an enigma how the very same people who promoted Sharia regime just a couple years ago, changed simultaneously as if they received some kind of revelation...Third, the political mind of the AKP leadership formed in a tradition of *takiyye* (deception when deemed necessary), intensified the suspicions.”<sup>399</sup>Yes, the AKP did not disclose –if there was any- ideological or philosophical underpinnings of its overly articulated change. This could have been a strategy of patience, as suggested by the secularist camp, or can it be framed as a policy of *strategic ambiguity*, which helped the AKP to bring together people from different political walks at the cost of intensifying the suspicions on the opposition side. The major exception on the secular side was the liberals, majority of whom supported the AKP in line with the EU reforms that the Party undertook<sup>400</sup> in its first term in government.

At the backdrop of these suspicions, the AKP experienced significant tensions with the secularist establishment over the issues of *lifestyle* and *identity*, which have been the major venues of securitization for the Republic primarily targeting the *conservatives* and *Kurds* respectively. Therefore, the reform agenda of the AKP involved *relative democratization* of state institutions which acted as tools of securitization. In line with the demands of conservative voter who suffered from the oppressive practices of 1997 military intervention, such as; being banned from university campuses for wearing headscarf, the relative democratization of the AKP aimed to soften and eventually disarticulate the secularist establishment in the state institutions that exercised these practices.

The Council of Higher Education (*Yüksek Öğretim Kurumu*, YÖK) is one such institution as “an autonomous institution which is responsible for the planning, coordination and governance of higher education system in Turkey in accordance with the Turkish

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<sup>399</sup>Alkan Türker, *Değişim?*, Radikal, <http://www.radikal.com.tr/yazarlar/turker-alkan/degisim-642363/>, 2004, last accessed on 23.05.2020.

<sup>400</sup>Tatlıcan İsa, *Liberaller Oyunu AK Parti'ye Verdi* (Liberals Voted for the AKP), Sabah, 19.04.2014, available here: <https://www.sabah.com.tr/gundem/2014/04/19/liberaller-oyunu-ak-partiye-verdi>, last accesses on 23.05.2020.

Constitution and the Higher Education Laws”<sup>401</sup>. Being an “oversight institution”, YÖK was formed by the post-1980 regime after the military coup to exercise a strict state control over universities. The ban on headscarf was put into practice in 1984 but was not practiced until post-1997 regime. In 1990s, the headscarf has become more visible at universities as the peripheral conservative people started climbing up the social ladder via country-wide national education system. As the number of students who wore headscarf increased, it created a tension between the prohibitionist-restrictive establishment and conservative students who became ever-more vocal in their demands of freedom for headscarf. For them, their right to education was being violated by the secularist bureaucracy, and this perception further alienated them from the secularist regime and created further mobilization for conservative politics.

Alongside the secular-conservative dispute, this was a matter of inter-class mobility: The peripheral masses with conservative lifestyle wanted to have full access and representation in the public space which was controlled by the secularist core, for whom wearing headscarf was a *political symbol* and allowing it use in universities was regarded as a compromise from *laiklik* (Turkish secularism as state control over religion) and Atatürk’s revolutions<sup>402</sup>. Therefore, it was banned, that is to say, securitized at the universities, yet, it proved counterproductive bringing the issue further to the public space as a matter of discussion. Since the ban created a significant victimhood, especially among the conservative voter, it was a major item on the political agenda of the country and the AKP had to address it. Being pressured by its constituency, the AKP passed an amendment at TBMM to lift the discrimination against conservative students, yet it was vetoed by the President Ahmet NecdetSezer on the basis of the legal assertion that; “religion cannot be allowed to go beyond the spiritual experiences of the individual and influence the social life, restrictions can be imposed on the faith and prayers of the individual to protect public order, trust and interests”<sup>403</sup>As a result the AKP had to wait until 2013, that is when it was much more established in power, to remove the headscarf ban in public work and the secularist was

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<sup>401</sup> For details of the higher education system in Turkey, see: <https://www.yok.gov.tr/en/institutional/higher-education-system>, last accessed on 24.05.2020.

<sup>402</sup> Staunch secularists in Turkey call Republican reforms as “revolutions”, in an effort to amplify and dramatize them. Foundation of Turkish Republic can technically be called a revolution, but the Republican reforms are the nothing more than establishment efforts of the new regime on its preferences. For the definition of the term revolution, see: <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/revolution>, last accesses on 24.05.2020.

<sup>403</sup> See the Parliamentary discussion on this article and the nature of secularism at Turkish Parliament: [https://www.tbmm.gov.tr/develop/owa/Tutanak\\_B\\_SD.birlesim\\_baslangic\\_yazici?P4=11985&P5=B&page1=21&page2=21](https://www.tbmm.gov.tr/develop/owa/Tutanak_B_SD.birlesim_baslangic_yazici?P4=11985&P5=B&page1=21&page2=21), last accesses on 25.05.2020.

disarticulated.<sup>404</sup> The irony here is that the removal of the ban was included in a package called “democratization package”, which followed AKP’s repressive policies on Gezi Protests, setting an example to how securitization was implemented in a selective manner.

YÖK got involved in political debates far outside its scope and took a position like a political party. When making a new constitution was being discussed by different actors in the public space, Erdoğan Teziç, then chairman of YÖK joined the debate and said: “Today, the political majority does not only want to seize the government but also the whole state authority.”<sup>405</sup> Framing the democratically elected government as “political majority” indicates that Teziç, a professor of constitutional law, did not consider the AKP as a legitimate power. Teziç was supported by all 78 universities in Turkey, public and private, without any opposition indicating the control that YÖK exercised over the universities contra government back then. In response to Teziç’s remarks, Erdoğan said; “Constitution is not done by YÖK, it is done by the legislative organ, that is to say, the deputies”<sup>406</sup> excluding the YÖK from the debate on the new constitution reminding. Erdoğan’s response can be called *legal disqualification*. However, YÖK went further in the political debate that on the eve of presidential election in 2007, the committee of rectors under YÖK had a public declaration saying that they did not want a “questionable President” for the country. The questionability was primarily defined by an unyielding allegiance to Turkish style secularism<sup>407</sup>. Having such a declaration would not bear any practical results as the President was going to be elected by parliament members who had previously set positions. The establishment was employing the state institutions that it controlled without much effectiveness indicating the scarcity of options and lack of a centralized strategy.

The “factory settings” of the Republic, promoted a civic identity that was formed around secular Turkishness and prohibited any challenge against that. The identity of the average Turkish citizen was therefore, removed from the field of political debate and set by the central authority in with ethnic and secular exclusions. The AKP, however, did not promote cultural Turkishness and took a precarious stance on the issue. On the one side, it

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<sup>404</sup> See the details of the legislative package here: <https://www.sabah.com.tr/gundem/2013/10/08/kamuda-basortusu-yasagi-kalkti>, last accessed on 25.05.2020.

<sup>405</sup> Hürriyet, YÖK’ten AKP’ye Ağır Suçlama (Heavy Accusations to Government by YÖK), Hürriyet, 11.05.2007, last accessed on 24.05.2020.

<sup>406</sup> See the details at: <https://www.cnnturk.com/2007/turkiye/10/06/turkiye.referandum.kulturune.alismali/396334.0/index.html>, last accessed on 24.05.2020.

<sup>407</sup> Milliyet, Rektörler Şaibesiz Cumhurbaşkanı İstedi, (Rectors did not Want a Questionable President), Milliyet, <https://www.milliyet.com.tr/siyaset/rektorler-saibesiz-cumhurbaskani-istedi-194901>, 06.04.2007, last accessed on 24.05.2020.

regarded “the cultural diversity of ‘the southeast’ as a source of richness that can contribute to the entrenchment of civic consciousness, defining national identity in relation to Turkish citizenship without making any reference to ethnic roots of a certain kind and hence strengthening societal bonds.”<sup>408</sup> Yet, Erdoğan used an ambiguous discourse and promoted a territory based patriotism which tried to bring together the conservative majority of his voter base with the *agreeable* Kurds. His rather fluctuating perspective on nationalism and ethnicity followed an interesting storyline: In 1993, he criticized the Turkish Constitution claiming that it had a racist tone. In 1997, he said all that matters is being a Muslim and on this basis Allah is going to judge humans in the afterlife. In 2002, he said there is no Kurdish issue in Turkey, yet in 2005, he said “there is a Kurdish issue, whether framed as the societal demands of citizens with Kurdish roots or in any other way”. In the same year he said, “Turkish, Kurdish, Circassian, Laz, Albanian, Bosniak... We call them as sub-identities. The upper identity for all of us is the citizenship of Turkish Republic.” Again, in the same year, he said, “Different ethnicities are cemented with the bond of religion in Turkey. Kurdish citizens do not have more problem than that of Turkish ones.”<sup>409</sup> Perhaps, in those years Erdoğan believed that recognizing different ethnic identities would create a relief among the people of those identities and downgrade them into passive elements under the citizenship of Turkish Republic. Mentioning different ethnic backgrounds one by one also aims at downgrading the significance of autochthonous nature of the Kurds implying that they are not different from Bosniaks or Circassians in terms of ethnic significance. Therefore, it implies that despite their near 16 million populations<sup>410</sup> the cultural and linguistic demands of Kurds bore no specific importance.

A draft law proposed by the AKP government in 2003 stipulated the empowerment of local authorities was opposed by MHP and CHP and eventually vetoed by the then President Sezer on the basis of potential harms that it would inflict upon the unitary nature of the state.<sup>411</sup> Despite not explicitly expressed, the concern of the secular nationalist opposition lied in the Kurdish loyalty which would be questionable if they are empowered. Unitary nature of the state, in Sezer’s words, does not only mean a political structure but also a –desired-

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<sup>408</sup> Yıldız Ahmet (2008), *ibid*, p. 55.

<sup>409</sup> See for an anthology of Erdoğan’s ethnically conscious identity claims in different years: <https://www.milliyet.com.tr/siyaset/kimlik-degisimi-138203>, Milliyet, 13.12.2005, last accessed on 25.05.2020.

<sup>410</sup> CIA’s World Factbook designated that 19% of Turkey’s population is ethnically Kurdish as of 2020. Available here: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/tu.html>.

<sup>411</sup> Details of the draft bill and the arguments of its opponents and proponents can be seen here: <https://www.memurlar.net/haber/184554/sezer-in-veto-ettigi-yasa-ilac-olabilirdi.html>, last accessed on 25.05.2020.

cultural homogeneity. In 2004, Sezer became more explicit in expressing his perspective that, “as long as they stay in the private realm the Republic accepts the sub-identities as richness... Promoting ethnic, religious or sectarian identities would wear out the national unity.”<sup>412</sup> As the highest representative of secularist establishment President Sezer’s expressions set textbook-example of securitization of identity from two aspects: First, they deny manifestation of different identities in the public space and confine them into the private realm. Second, these identities are portrayed as threat to national unity, that is, in a reverse reading, once they are manifested in the public space, they would threaten the national unity. In the same speech, Sezer referred to the concept of Enlightenment 4 times and reiterated that; “The Republic is a design of modernization and Enlightenment that foresees a renewal in political, social and cultural matters.” Referring to Republican reforms, Sezer uses the term, “revolutions of Enlightenment” and emphasizes that (Turkish) secularism constitutes the very foundation of the successes of the Republic. The overall framework of President Sezer’s speech stands as a reminder of *double wings of securitization* which was defined in the first decades of the Republic in a *secularist* and *nationalist* perspective.

Deniz Baykal, the then chairman of CHP which represented the same value-set with the secularist establishment, claimed that the identity debate initiated by Erdoğan is rather unnecessary and argues that juxtaposition of Turkishness as a sub-identity alongside other ethnic identities cannot be accepted. His point was that the people lived in Turkish Republic are called Turkish nation and Turkey is not a federation of sub-identities<sup>413</sup>. Ertuğrul Özkök, the editor in chief of Hürriyet daily, which has acted as the flagship of the secularist establishment’s worldview saw the identity debate in terms of social class. When a conservative person, Durmuş Yılmaz, was assigned as the chairman of The Central Bank of the Republic of Turkey, he framed the assignment as the “the revolution of the wretched” and asks whether it was “the beginning of the purge of white Turks”<sup>414</sup>. White Turk in this framing refers to the secularist Turkish elite who constituted the socio-political and economic centre of Turkish Republic since its foundation.

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<sup>412</sup> See the full text of Sezer’s speech on the 81th anniversary of the foundation of Turkish Republic at the website of Turkish Parliament: <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/basin-aciklamalari-ahmet-necdet-sezer/1720/6425/cumhuriyet-bayrami-mesaji>, last accessed on 25.05.2020.

<sup>413</sup> See Baykal’s speech at: <https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/baykal-turklugu-alt-kimlik-sayana-dur-denir-3644124>, last accessed on 25.05.2020.

<sup>414</sup> Özkök Ertuğrul, *Beyaz Türklerin Tasfiyesi mi?* (The Purge of White Turks?), Hürriyet, 21.04.2006, <https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/beyaz-turklerin-tasfiyesi-mi-4289586>, last accessed on 25.05.2020.

All things considered, AKP's effort of de-securitizing the identity that has been promoted and protected by the Republic, was met with resistance by the secularist establishment through its bureaucracy, political party and media organs. "It should be noted that the JDP leadership has not been successful in de-securitizing the identity issues of Turkey with its claims of engaging with politics of consensus."<sup>415</sup> In other words, despite bringing the identity issue to the agenda of political debate, the AKP has indicated a partial progress in removing the restrictions imposed upon the civic identity in Turkey using the leverage explained in the following section.

## **2.6. Triple Leverage of AKP**

Initial years of the AKP can be defined by three interrelated developments that supported one another: First, low inflation rates that co-extended with the economic growth. Turkey's determination in EU access reforms and the continuation of the fiscal discipline that was agreed upon between the Turkish government and International Monetary Fund (IMF) prior to the AKP government bore fruits for the country. Second, reforms conducted in consolidation of democracy and de-securitization of identity issues, especially the opening of the political system towards the Kurds. Third, the foreign policy paradigm was changed from a resistance-oriented and semi-open diplomatic tradition to pro-active and open one.<sup>416</sup>

Despite the resistance it met from the secularist establishment, there was also a multi-factored opportunity space in front of the AKP with three interconnected leverages; a) Turkey's changing position in the NATO and its relations with the United States, b) The EU access process and reform demands from the EU, c) societal demands for a more established democracy and economic stability. In all three issues, neither the secularist establishment nor the opposition parties had the advantages the AKP had in terms of orientation and political communication. As the policies in its first term in the government indicate, the Party recognized these leverages and effectively used them.

### **2.6.1. AKP Coming to Fore as a Strategic Partner for the United States**

Turkey became a NATO member in search of a security alliance against Soviet encroachment from its eastern borders after WWII. It would be fair to claim that the Soviet threat only accelerated the process and added a security dimension to Turkey's search for a

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<sup>415</sup>Duran Burhanettin, "The Justice and Development Party's 'new politics'", CizreÜmit (Ed), *Secular and Islamic Politics in Turkey: The Making of Justice and Development Party*, Routledge, London, 2008, p. 23.

<sup>416</sup>Öniş Ziya, Yılmaz Şuhnaz, "Between Europeanization and Euro-Asianism: Foreign Policy Activism in Turkey during the AKP Era", *Turkish Studies*, vol. 10, no. 1, 2009, p. 7-24.



place among Western powers. Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs officially acknowledges that “the North Atlantic Alliance has played a central role in Turkey’s security and contributed to its integration with the Euro-Atlantic community. Turkey, in return, has successfully assumed its responsibilities in defending the common values of the Alliance.”<sup>417</sup>

Ahmet Davutoğlu, the architect of AKP’s foreign policy, and who later served as the Prime Minister and chairman of the Party, laid the emphasis on the changing international relations upon the end of Cold War and diversification of Turkey’s options in line with the change. In his rather ambitious work, *Strategic Depth* (Stratejik Derinlik), he draws on the victory of Western bloc and NATO, and proposes that Turkey should utilize this by playing an active and effective role in Atlantic-based regional and global regulations. For him, the country should follow a pro-active and confident foreign policy and diversify its options maintaining in the Atlantic axis.<sup>418</sup> With this mindset and in a systematic approach, Davutoğlu, at least discursively, built Turkey’s foreign policy on five pillars; a) setting up a balance between security and freedoms, b) zero problems with neighbouring countries, c) multi-dimensional and multi-tracked foreign policy, d) seeing Turkey as a pivotal country rather than a bridge between East and West, e) rhythmic diplomacy.<sup>419</sup>

This country-based strategic approach fell in line with AKP’s search for allies-as-leverage outside Turkey to balance the secularist establishment in the country. Given that TAF’s strategic relations with NATO countries, specifically with the United States (U.S.), lacked the depth of common values in terms of upholding democracy, there was an opportunity space for the AKP to step in as an *agreeable partner* for the U.S. This is why when the American authorities demanded to use Turkish territories to transfer their troops to invade Iraq, the first AKP government gave approval<sup>420</sup>. Yet, later when it was put to vote for Parliamentary resolution on March 1, 2003, the AKP failed to secure an approval. When asked about his position on the failed Resolution, Erdoğan stated that he supported the Resolution yet he failed because of the mistakes that AKP deputies made.<sup>421</sup> American invasion in Iraq had deeply disturbed the TAF that it would increase the likelihood of

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<sup>417</sup>See the details of official Turkish perspective on NATO membership at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs website: <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/nato.en.mfa>, last accessed on 27.05.2020.

<sup>418</sup>Davutoğlu Ahmet, *Stratejik Derinlik*, Küre Yayınları, İstanbul, 2001, p. 212.

<sup>419</sup>The five points were referred as the pillars of Turkey’s new foreign policy at a television interview with Ahmet Davutoğlu. See for details: <http://www.radikal.com.tr/yorum/turkiye-merkez-ulke-olmali-702116/>, last accessed on 22.05.2020.

<sup>420</sup>Bush George W., *Decision Points*, Crown Publishers, New York, 2010, p. 203-204.

<sup>421</sup>See for detailed analysis of March 1 Resolution Crisis: <http://ankaenstitusu.com/1-mart-tezkeresinin-onemi/>, last accessed on 22.05.2020.



formation of an independent Kurdish state in Northern Iraq. The established security paradigm of Turkey, which was built and represented by TAF perceived this as a threat and therefore, they were hesitant to support the American operation. The then Deputy Foreign Secretary of the United States, Paul Wolfowitz clearly accused the TAF for the Parliament's rejection and said, "especially the military did not conduct the strong leadership that we expected."<sup>422</sup> Here, it is worth to underline that the American authorities were used to seeing TAF as the major decision maker when it came to security-related issues. Erdoğan's (rather discursive) support for the American demands at the backdrop of TAF's hesitation brought the AKP to the fore as a strategic partner for the US in Turkey, as the government with Parliamentary majority and the broadest popular support. All things considered, with March 1 process, the AKP increased its legitimacy in the eyes of United States as an agreeable partner and increased its relative gain *vis a vis* TAF, that is, most threatening institution for the Party.

The convergence between the US administration and the AKP further materialized with the co-chairman status of Erdoğan in "Partnership for Progress and a Common Future with the Region of the Broader Middle East and North Africa" project, initiated by the Americans at the G8 meeting. The project was publicly known as Greater Middle East Project and officially aimed to "support for democratic, social and economic reform emanating from that region"<sup>423</sup>. With Erdoğan's co-chairmanship, AKP expressed its adherence to Turkey's trans-Atlantic alliance and recognition of the prominence of the United States.

AKP and Erdoğan were heavily criticized for his status in this rather vague and publicly debated project by the nationalist opposition in Turkey<sup>424</sup> however, Erdoğan acknowledged and praised his status as co-chairman of the Project<sup>425</sup> with the perspective that Turkey has a duty in the MENA region. The Project set forth comprehensive change in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), and discursively recognizing the sovereignty of the countries in the region, it encompasses transforming the region with heavy external influence.

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<sup>422</sup>See for details: <https://www.birgun.net/haber/1-mart-tezkeresi-ni-yeniden-dusunmek-250207>, last accessed on 22.05.2020.

<sup>423</sup>See the details of the Project and official statement at the US Department of State website: <https://2001-2009.state.gov/e/eeb/rls/fs/33375.htm>, last accessed on 25.04.2020.

<sup>424</sup> CHP, the main opposition built on Erdoğan's status and used redrawn maps of Turkey claiming that the MENA Project would end up with secession of eastern parts of Turkey. The implication here was that Erdoğan was leading a Project that would end the territorial integrity of Turkey. Available here: <https://www.haber7.com/siyaset/haber/254248-baykalin-son-bombasi>. In a similar fashion, Doğu Perinçek, the leader of the fringe ultranationalist VatanPartisi (Homeland Party) with pro-Russia leanings, claims that Turkey's Prime Minister cannot receive any assignment from United States. He also argues that Erdoğan has acknowledged his status publicly 34 times. Available here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4r4AVfGFUEc>, last accessed on 20.07.2020.

<sup>425</sup>For speech, see: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VN5zx7gPKeM>, last accessed on 28.05.2020.

Erdoğan defended the Project claiming that it was designed to promote peace and economic development in the region and improve basic rights and freedoms. In his personal defence, he also said that as the Prime Minister of the country he did not sign under anything binding for Turkey and it was a humanitarian duty for Turkey to undertake. He also acknowledged that the Project was dead very soon and therefore, bore no political significance.<sup>426</sup>

Albeit dead-born, the MENA Project fell in line with AKP's policies in the initial years. It empowered AKP's hand against the secularist establishment in two fronts: First, it positioned the AKP as an actor to promote democratic rights and expanded its discursive space. Second, the Project indicated that the AKP was ready and willing to act along Western countries and increased its political prominence in the country as the actor to integrate Turkey to the West. The momentum and legitimacy that it gained in the international arena improved the Party's position in the country and facilitated the de-securitization policies that it followed in its initial years.

### **2.6.2. EU Access Reforms: *Primary External Driver of De-securitization***

Turkey applied for full membership to European Economic Community in 1987 in line with the liberal-leaning reforms of Turgut Özal. Upon being rejected, it has signed the Customs Union Agreement in 1995 and was given full candidate status in 1999 in Helsinki Summit "without any precondition". As the EU Commission officially started working on Accession Partnership for Turkey in 2001, the Turkish government declared its National Programme of the Adoption of EU *acquis*. According to Directorate of EU Affairs of Turkish Foreign Ministry, Turkey updated its national programme in line with the updates that EU placed and exhibited a "political will that shows its determination in EU membership and accelerated the reform process. Thus, Turkey began to take significant steps in order to comply with the political criteria, and harmonization packages were approved by the Turkish Grand National Assembly and entered into force. The harmonization packages primarily pertained to consolidation of democracy and expanding the public space for basic rights and freedoms. For the purposes of this study, they acted as the primary external driver of de-securitization on Turkey.

AKP's strong pro-EU reform agenda was linked with creating legitimacy and maintaining its public support, as well as building an external leverage for the reforms that

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<sup>426</sup>See for details: <https://www.haberturk.com/gundem/haber/121091-erdogandan-bop-esbaskani-elistirilerine-yanit>, last accessed on 28.04.2020.

aim at democratization and disarticulation of the military and judicial bureaucracy that pose a threat to the very existence of the Party. The AKP “...recognized that for a religiously oriented party to survive and remain in power the best way forward was to align with the EU cause and the democratic reforms tied to it”<sup>427</sup>. Thus, for all its practical benefits, the EU access reforms constituted the main source of momentum and driver of change in its reformist period, that is between 2002 and 2011. Since the EU followed the legislation and implementation of these reforms in an attentive and systematic manner and publish them as Progress Reports, these reports provide a great framework to track the change. Furthermore, the Reports have a specific focus on issues that pertain to basic rights and freedoms and rule of law and therefore, offer suitable framework and content for this thesis as its main axis of examination is securitization. This is why the EU Progress Reports are used in this thesis as major guidelines to cross check the findings of the thesis from other sources in the reformist period when they had political significance (2002-2011). For the period that follows 2011 the Progress Reports were still used but only when they deemed relevant in the thesis and no separate title were dedicated to them as the EU reforms lost their political significance.

While the Progress Reports provide state level (systemic) analysis for the purposes of this study, the data and evaluation provided by national and international NGOs that follow Turkey in the field of civil and political rights offers complementary insight into the analyses of Progress Reports. With this perspective, the thesis uses 2 major international NGOs; Freedom House (FH) and Human Rights Watch (HRW) and complements it with national ones such as; TESEV<sup>428</sup> and KONDA<sup>429</sup>. When the issue being studied pertains, the data offered by other international initiatives like; *World Justice Project (WJP)* and *Transparency International (TI)* are also used. Alongside the perspective of democracy that they share, these institutions were selected in this study for the unbiased and objective information that is not organized around the interests of specific agents including states, interest groups or any other powerhouses. Another criterion is provision of quantified data obtained with a clear methodology that is universally applied in the measurement of performance and ranking of countries. Turkish organisations involved in standard evaluation are kept limited in this thesis

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<sup>427</sup> Goff-Taylor Moira, “The Shifting Drivers of the AKP’s EU Policy”, Wilson Centre Middle East Program, *Occasional Paper Series*, Summer 2017, p. 3.

<sup>428</sup> As a prominent Turkish NGO, TESEV ranked 28th in the world in 2019 Global Go To Think Tank Index Report, published by University of Pennsylvania, in terms of the impact on public policy. See here: [https://repository.upenn.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1018&context=think\\_tanks](https://repository.upenn.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1018&context=think_tanks), last accessed on 21.05.2020.

<sup>429</sup> With the information, insight and reports that it provides on a broad variety of issues, KONDA, perhaps, is the most established and reliable research and consultancy company. Details are available here: <https://konda.com.tr/en/home/>.

and there are two reasons for that: First, civil society has not developed in Turkey at the level of established democracies<sup>430</sup>. Most NGOs are weak and few major ones are pressured to take pro-government positions. Furthermore, some of them act as civic extensions of government policies, and perform more like government organized NGOs (GONGOs). “They are “civil society” organizations in name; however, they are not independent and do not contribute to the expansion of the civil sphere and democratization.”<sup>431</sup>Therefore there is a shortage of politically unbiased and independent information from among Turkish civil society organisations.

### **2.6.2.1. EU Reforms Prior to AKP: 1998-2002**

European Union has been publishing reports on Turkey’s progress since 1998 regarding the country’s harmonization with EU norms. IN other words, the Progress Reports monitor Turkey’s compatibility for EU membership and lays out guidelines on the issues that are relevant to membership. The reports “analyse the situation in respect of the political criteria set by the 1993 Copenhagen European Council (democracy, rule of law, human rights, protection of minorities); – assess Turkey’s situation and prospects in respect of the economic criteria defined by the Copenhagen European Council (a functioning market economy and the capacity to cope with competitive pressures and market forces within the Union).”<sup>432</sup> The major issues in the Copenhagen Council; democracy, rule of law, human rights and protection of minorities, directly and strongly relate to the practices of securitization. Therefore, with their focus being laid on the relevant legal and political changes and their actual implementation, the Reports provide a useful monitoring and assessing tool for the AKP’s policies on the axis of securitization.

Providing a broad analysis of public and political space in Turkey prior to the AKP rule, the 1998 Report underlines deficits in democratic principles, yet also praises the progress: “Turkey has made an effort to gradually bring about a real improvement in the enjoyment of such rights as freedom of association... On the other hand, and for reasons mostly connected to the situation in the south-east, the state of other civil and political rights is still giving cause for concern”<sup>433</sup>.“Situation in the south-east” obviously refers to lack of

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<sup>430</sup>Heper Metin, Yıldırım Senem, “Revisiting Civil Society in Turkey”, *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, vol. 11, no. 1, 2011.

<sup>431</sup>Diner Çağla, “Gender Politics and GONGOs in Turkey”, *Turkish Policy Quarterly*, 2018, Winter Issue, p. 103.

<sup>432</sup> See pages 4 of 2004 Regular Report Turkey From the Commission on Turkey’s Progress Towards Accession at: <https://www.avrupa.info.tr/sites/default/files/2016-11/2004.pdf>

<sup>433</sup> See the details of *Regular Report From the Commission on Turkey’s Progress Towards Accession* at: <https://www.avrupa.info.tr/sites/default/files/2016-11/1998.pdf>

basic security in South-eastern Turkey stemming from pro-Kurdish PKK terrorism and harsh measures that Turkish authorities take. According to the Report, freedom of association and assembly are both subject to limitations, yet, there has been a momentous proliferation in the number of activities of NGOs. As state monopoly in media ended in 1993, there has been a significant increase in the diversity of media outlets while media enjoyed a certain level of freedom of expression, despite prevailing practices of self-censorship.

Referring to the rise of PKK terrorism<sup>434</sup> upon the arrest of its leader, Abdullah Öcalan, the 1999 Report declares that, “the EU fully upholds the territorial integrity of Turkey. At the same time, the EU expects Turkey to resolve its problems by political means with full respect for human rights, the rule of law in a democratic society and in full accordance with Turkey’s commitments as a member of the Council of Europe.”<sup>435</sup> The EU authorities underline that Turkey’s terrorism-related security concerns are legitimate, yet they also warn that the fight against terrorism must be conducted within the boundaries of rule of law. The report praises the reforms made by the coalition government formed by DSP, MHP and ANAP that made party closures more difficult and removed military judges were from State Security Courts (DGM) that deals with political crimes including secessionism. The Report criticizes the continuance of military influence on civilian politics through MGK.

The 2000 Progress Report finds broad debates in Turkish society on political reforms favourable yet also underlines that the institutional implementation is less-than-adequate. Freedom of expression and assembly are frequently restricted and ill-treatment of prisoners continues despite efforts of the government. This indicates that the government did not have full supervision on such practices especially when they were committed in the context of counter terrorism. Economic developments are also applauded in the report mentioning that

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<sup>434</sup>Bacik Gökhan., Coşkun Bezen B., “The PKK Problem: Explaining Turkey's Failure to Develop a Political Solution”, *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 2011, vol. 34, p. 248–265. This article provides an overall perspective of the PKK problem in a political context. The PKK stands for Kurdistan Workers Party (*Partiya Karkeran Kurdistan*), which is the name of an ethnically motivated pro-Kurdish terrorist movement that is designated a terrorist group by the European Union and United States. Primarily the PKK started as a reaction to exclusionary formation of national identity of Turkish Republic which promoted ethnic-cultural nationalism as the content in the framework of a political one that is stated in the Constitution. As the Kurdish culture and language were securitized in the public space by the Republic the Kurds revolted 3 times in the initial years upon the foundation of Turkey. PKK, for its supporters, is the last and longest Kurdish insurgency that manifests itself through terrorism which started in 1984. Securitization of the Kurdish culture, that is to say framing it in a military-security framework, deteriorated the issue. PKK and the Kurdish issue are further elaborated in the next chapter in the context of AKP’s de-securitization efforts.

<sup>435</sup>For details of 1999 Regular Report Turkey From the Commission on Turkey’s Progress Towards Accession, see: <https://www.avrupa.info.tr/sites/default/files/2016-11/1999.pdf> Last accessed on 25.04.2020.

many sectors of Turkish are already able to sustain competitive pressures that would come from those of EU<sup>436</sup>.

The 2001 Progress Report acknowledges that “the constitutional amendments adopted by the Turkish Parliament on 3 October 2001 are a significant step towards strengthening guarantees in the field of human rights and fundamental freedoms and limiting capital punishment.”<sup>437</sup>The 2001 Report identifies positive developments in terms of cultural and political rights and highlights the abolishment of legal prohibition of the use of languages other than Turkish.<sup>438</sup>Drawing the attention on the deficits in judicial independence and transparency of public authorities, the Report elaborates on the prevalence of corruption, including their public acceptance. As EU adopted its first Accession Partnership for Turkey on 8 March 2001, “Turkey started a dynamic and intensive process to study the *acquis* and to prepare legislative changes in conformity with it. A number of committees and working groups have been established inside the Turkish government, which are fully engaged in this process.”<sup>439</sup>

The 2002 Progress Report praises the three reform packages that the Parliament endorsed on human rights issues in 2002 and observes that the government is determined in their implementation.<sup>440</sup> While the new civilian-majority MGK is seen as a positive development, its intervention into civilian politics is still perceived as troublesome in terms of democratic credentials. In a similar vein, while the continuance of State Security Courts is criticized, the decision on the gradual abolishment of state of emergency in Kurdish majority south-eastern cities is commended in the report. Reforms such as abolishment of capital punishment and reduction of police detention to a maximum of four days have also been appreciated in 2002 Report.

Most of the issues that have been underlined in EU Progress Reports from 1998 to 2002 can be framed as “calls for de-securitization” by the EU to Turkey. In institutional terms, de-securitization calls focused on MGK and DGMs, which have been frequently mentioned as encroachments on civilian politics in the Reports. Both institutions were seen as

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<sup>436</sup>See the conclusion of 2000 *Regular Report Turkey From the Commission on Turkey's Progress Towards Accession* at: <https://www.avrupa.info.tr/sites/default/files/2016-11/2000.pdf>, last accessed on 26.04.2020.

<sup>437</sup> See 2001 *Regular Report Turkey From the Commission on Turkey's Progress Towards Accession* at: <https://www.avrupa.info.tr/sites/default/files/2016-11/2001.pdf>, last accessed on 26.04.2020.

<sup>438</sup>See page 96 of 2001 Report.

<sup>439</sup>See page 100 of 2001 Report.

<sup>440</sup>See page 25 of 2002 *Regular Report Turkey From the Commission on Turkey's Progress Towards Accession* at: <https://www.avrupa.info.tr/sites/default/files/2016-11/2002.pdf>, last accessed on 27.04.2020.

hindrances of a consolidated democracy. Another institutional constraint for democracy was identified as high judiciary and its *habitus* of closing the political parties that were not regarded as legitimate by the regime despite their legal status. Denying certain people from full representation in political space is an extreme form of securitization; therefore, rarefying the party closure has been appreciated by the EU as a direct act of de-securitization. Another fixture on the Reports was the Kurdish issue, which was framed, perhaps regarding Turkey's sensitivities back in time, as *South-east issue*.

A specific mention in the report has been made for the Anti-terror Law, which has been providing the authorities with excessive legal justification and has been used to oppress dissidence. The first article of the Law comes with a definition which has not changed in any significant way since its inception in 1991: "Terrorism is any criminal act conducted by members of a terrorist organisation that aims at changing basic features of Republic, that is to say, the political, legal, economic, social or secular order by violence, coercion, intimidation or threat. Such acts could also target the indivisible integrity of state with its country and nation, aim at creating vulnerability in state authority or seize it altogether, destroying basic rights and freedoms..."<sup>441</sup> The article is clearly and explicitly designed to protect the state and has little and indirect focus on the safety of civilians. Another point is, as it is used in some other parts of the Constitution<sup>442</sup>, the *country* and *nation* are defined in relevance and subordination to the *state*. The text has a connotation that state possesses both the country and the nation, and is positioned higher than them. The United Nations, on the other hand, frames terrorism as follows: "any action constitutes terrorism if it is intended to cause death or serious bodily harm to civilians or non-combatants, with the purpose of intimidating a population or compelling a Government or an international organization to do or abstain from doing any act"<sup>443</sup> The UN's approach builds on the harm that terrorism inflicts upon civilians and the intimidation that they suffer, and then mentions its effects on states. The Anti-Terror Law of Turkey has been pivotal not only in its framing of terrorism and counter-terror measures, but also in debates of country's democratic performance and implementation of basic rights and freedoms. Therefore, discussions on this law and its implementations are closely related to the practices of securitization, the primary focus this thesis. Especially in the

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<sup>441</sup>Translated by the author of the thesis from the official document of the Law. See details at: <https://www.mevzuat.gov.tr/MevzuatMetin/1.5.3713.pdf>, last accessed on 29.04.2020.

<sup>442</sup>For example, the Third Article of the Constitution stipulates that, " Turkish state is an indivisible whole with its country and nation". The same implicit possession of country and nation is expressed on behalf of the state.

<sup>443</sup>See for details of the general framework that UN uses for terrorism: <https://www.un.org/press/en/2005/sg2095.doc.htm>, last accessed on 29.04.2020.



periods of re-securitization (post-2011) this law enabled the AKP to crackdown on dissidence remaining within the boundaries of law.

### **2.6.2.2.AKP and Acceleration of Reforms: 2002-2007**

The abovementioned Progress Reports that were issued before the AKP indicate that the Party inherited a politico-legal momentum from previous governments. It then, owned up the momentum, placed political will behind and took it to further degrees. In the first year of the AKP government, in a visit to Germany, Erdoğan reminded a historical fact and stated that Turkey's adoption of European legal norms date back to Ottoman reforms and Turkey embraces the fundamental values of Western democracies.<sup>444</sup> In 2002, before he was officially the Prime Minister of Turkey, Erdoğan visited many European countries to lobby for Turkey's membership to EU. In his visit to Italy, he underlined that the government is ready to take reform steps for EU access and presented a draft reform package to Silvio Berlusconi, then the Italian Prime Minister. The draft included; a Constitutional reform, enhancement of freedom of thought, expression, religion and assembly, facilitation of activities of associations, and zero tolerance on torture. It also included signing the awaiting international agreements and conformation to rulings of European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) without any delay.<sup>445</sup> In the first government programme of the AKP, the importance of the EU access was mentioned as: "Full membership to EU is our primary target for economic and democratic development. Furthermore, the economic and democratic standards presented by the EU will be supported regardless of the end result in terms of the membership."<sup>446</sup>

Erdoğan's argument on the embrace of Western democratic norms in Germany indicates the *positioning* of the AKP in political matters and nature of the state. With this clear statement he articulated that he had abandoned the anti-Western sentiments of his Islamist past. In the same vein, all the points in the draft reform package he shared with the Italian Prime Minister included some sort of de-securitization, so much so that it could be framed as a *package of de-securitization*. Therefore, it would be fair to say that the AKP has embraced pro-EU politics in terms of positioning, discourse and policy at the beginning of its rule. The overall performance of EU reforms under the AKP rule in the coming years and EU's

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<sup>444</sup>See the rest of Erdoğan's speech at: <https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/erdogan-ab-degerlerini-paylasiyoruz-169175>, last accessed on 30.04.2020.

<sup>445</sup>See the details of Erdoğan's visit to Italy and his statements: <https://www.milliyet.com.tr/siyaset/berlusconi-den-ab-icin-destek-5198187>, last accessed on 30.04.2020.

<sup>446</sup>See the full text of the first government programme of the AKP at the website of Turkey's Official Gazette: <https://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/eskiler/2002/11/20021129.htm>, last accessed on 30.04.2020.



Progress Reports, then, deserve elaboration to outline the policies of the AKP on the *axis of securitization*.

In need of an “agreeable ally” outside the country to establish domestically, the AKP felt compelled that it needed to persuade the EU decision-makers on its enthusiasm of membership to the Union. On the side of the EU, AKP as a major representative of post-Islamism, posed an alternative democracy-friendly formation contra radical Islamism, soon after 9-11 attacks in the United States. Furthermore, the existing Euro-scepticism of the secularist establishment and its less-than-democratic mindset singled out the AKP as an agreeable ally in Turkey. Furthermore, broad electoral support of the Party rendered the AKP as a potent interlocutor with popular legitimacy, which can carry out reforms that are put forward by the EU.

### **Brief Assessment of Reforms in 2003**

2003 Progress Report, as the first one that covers the AKP government’s performance, puts forward that “the goal of EU accession has been amongst the government’s main priorities. On several occasions, the government reiterated its commitment to fulfil the Copenhagen political criteria before the end of 2004.”<sup>447</sup> The Report observes that the authority, supervision and access of Secretary General of MGK over public institutions were reduced and transparency of defence expenditures was enhanced rendering the MGK more accountable. The efficiency of judiciary was increased and the right to re-trial was granted if ECHR finds violations of its legal framework. Anti-corruption measures have been taken; yet, as their effect remained very limited and Parliamentary sub-committees were formed to increase their effectiveness.<sup>448</sup> The AKP government’s first year performance was appreciated by the EU in many areas including, adopting zero tolerance for torture and overall betterment of detention conditions. Lifting the restrictions on the freedom of expression and state of emergency in predominantly Kurdish cities through amendments in Penal Code and Anti-Terror Law also brought limited yet positive change in freedom of assembly. The progress and stability of the economic and financial reforms were openly praised in the Report with a

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<sup>447</sup>See pages 18-19 of 2003 *Regular Report Turkey From the Commission on Turkey’s Progress Towards Accession* at: <https://www.avrupa.info.tr/sites/default/files/2016-11/2003.pdf>, last accessed on 30.04.2020.

<sup>448</sup>See pages 22-23 of the same report.

reminder that the AKP government followed the financial policies predominantly crafted by the previous government and IMF in 2001.

The Turkey part of 2003 Freedom in The World Report of Freedom House (FH) mentions the judiciary's susceptibility to executive interference and limitations on freedom of expression through Criminal Code and Anti-Terror Law. The Report has a positive take on the improvements in both political rights and civil liberties and applauds the relaxation on the limitations of the cultural rights of Kurds.<sup>449</sup> The Turkey part of HRW World Report 2003 appreciates the EU access reforms finally bearing substantial results, acknowledges legal improvements on access to legal services for detainees, abolishment of death penalty and making the broadcasting and education in languages other than Turkish, legal.

#### **Brief Assessment of Reforms in 2004**

The AKP government's determination is highlighted in 2004 Report for making the EU reforms a permanent item on the agenda of cabinet meetings and assigning a Deputy Prime minister with the duty of informing the cabinet on the developments on that issue.<sup>450</sup> Education's share in the total budget of the country was reported to exceed that of national defence for the first time with 3.06% to 2.59% respectively.<sup>451</sup> In the context of legal reforms, Justice Academy was established to inform the judges and prosecutors about the international law and human rights issues. Furthermore, DGMs were abolished and the supremacy of international law and agreements and European treaties that Turkey ratified over the domestic law was endorsed. This was made with a Constitutional amendment (Article 90) and is specifically important in terms of Turkey's allegiance to international standards on human rights related issues. This amendment is a giant systemic step of de-securitization. In a similar vein, the government's newly adopted policy of zero tolerance on torture decreased the ill treatment of detainees significantly.<sup>452</sup> The growth rate of Turkish economy was reported to

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<sup>449</sup>See pages 565-569 of Freedom in the World 2003 Report here: [https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/2020-02/Freedom\\_in\\_the\\_World\\_2003\\_complete\\_book.pdf](https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/2020-02/Freedom_in_the_World_2003_complete_book.pdf), last accessed on 06.05.2020

<sup>450</sup> See pages 20-21 of 2004 Regular Report Turkey from the Commission on Turkey's Progress towards Accession at: <https://www.avrupa.info.tr/sites/default/files/2016-11/2004.pdf>, last accessed on 30.04.2020.

<sup>451</sup>See page 23 of the 2004 Report.

<sup>452</sup> See page 34 of the 2004 Report.

exceed 10% in the first quarter of 2004.<sup>453</sup> It is also mentioned that by the end of 2003 the trade volume between Turkey and the EU had increased to 54.7% of overall foreign trade of Turkey, signifying mutual dependence. This mutual economic dependence limits the parties in two ways: While it places restrictions on EU's exercise of influence over Turkey, it brings constraints to Turkey's violations of ECHR and anti-Western political discourse.

2004 Report of FH praises the de-securitizing reforms, especially the ones on the Kurdish issue, and argues, "...advocating school instruction in Kurdish no longer necessarily invites a conviction for conspiring to break up the Turkish state. However, laws against "insulting" the state remain on the books... Journalists are frequent targets of prosecution; criticizing the military or Kurdish policy is particularly dangerous."<sup>454</sup> A survey conducted by TESEV in 2004 indicated that the "overall satisfaction from the government services" has increased from 2.8/10 in the year 2000 to 5.8/10 in 2004<sup>455</sup> exhibiting the level of consent that the AKP created within the society in the initial years.

### **Brief Assessment of Reforms in 2005**

In December 2004 the European Council decided to open accession negotiations with Turkey that was envisaged to start in October 2005. According to the decision, Turkey was to carry out legislation to improve the overall situation in human rights and rule of law. While the 2005 report praises the achievements of the AKP government in legislative work, including Constitutional amendments, it also stipulates that civilian control over the military must be strengthened and protection of basic rights and freedoms must be further established. The Report mentions normalization of "the situation in the southeast" and full enjoyment of cultural rights for Kurds as a fundamental requirement. Fight against corruption and transparency in public administration are also underlined as issues to overcome. The legislation in Penal Code and implementation of previous legal reforms were also appreciated in 2005 Progress Report.<sup>456</sup> In 2005 the AKP endorsed personal application to European Court of Human Rights (ECHR), amended the Article 90 of Turkish Constitution, endorsed the legal status of international agreements and declared that in the presence of a conflict between

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<sup>453</sup>See pages 57-58 of the 2004 Report.

<sup>454</sup>See page 582 of Freedom in the World 2004 Report here: [https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/2020-02/Freedom\\_in\\_the\\_World\\_2004\\_complete\\_book.pdf](https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/2020-02/Freedom_in_the_World_2004_complete_book.pdf), last accessed on 07.05.2020

<sup>455</sup>Adaman Fikret et al., *Toplumun Kamu Yönetimine Kamu Hizmetlerine ve Reforma Bakışı*, (Public Perception on Public Administration Public Services and Reform), TESEV Publications, İstanbul, 2005, p.26. Available here: [https://www.tesev.org.tr/wp-content/uploads/rapor\\_Toplumun\\_Kamu\\_Yonetimine\\_Kamu\\_Hizmetlerine\\_Ve\\_Reforma\\_Bakisi.pdf](https://www.tesev.org.tr/wp-content/uploads/rapor_Toplumun_Kamu_Yonetimine_Kamu_Hizmetlerine_Ve_Reforma_Bakisi.pdf), last accessed on 28.05.2020.

<sup>456</sup>See pages 4-15 of 2005 Regular Report Turkey From the Commission on Turkey's Progress Towards Accession at: <https://www.avrupa.info.tr/sites/default/files/2016-11/2005.pdf>, last accessed on 01.05.2020.

Turkish law and international one that Turkey is a signatory, the latter is to be applied.<sup>457</sup> Expectedly the endorsement of supremacy of ECHR over national court created a huge influx of applications to ECHR making Turkey the country with highest applications for the violations of basic rights and freedoms.<sup>458</sup>

2005 Report of FH indicates a rather positive evaluation for the year and summarizes the situation as follows: “Turkey's civil liberties rating improved from 4 to 3 due to the passage of another round of major reforms, including a complete overhaul of the penal code, greater civilian control of the military, the initiation of broadcasts in minority languages, and a decrease in the severest forms of torture.”<sup>459</sup> The Report emphasizes the importance of Erdoğan’s leadership, yet underlines the prospect of EU access as the prime motive for the reforms, implying the lack domestic drive for them. Previously established “measures of securitization” maintained in the first years of the AKP such as; not allowing women with headscarves in universities and purging religious people from TAF. As later developments indicated the AKP followed a *strategy of patience* on issues pertaining to the issues of religious freedom. 2005 Report also recognizes the thriving civil society in the country, which translates into an expansion in the public space and improvement especially in right to assembly and freedom of expression.

The 2005 HRW Report argues that “Turkey’s human rights record continued to improve during 2004, albeit slowly and unevenly...” and positions the resistance of bureaucracy as the major underlying reason: “Reform has taken one step back for every two steps forward as police, governors, prosecutors, and government institutions tend to interpret legislation as restrictively as possible.”<sup>460</sup> The Report positions the AKP government and secular establishment at odds in terms of the content and implementation of reforms. In other words, the bureaucracy, the Report claims, resisted to de-securitizing reforms of the AKP as much as it could. Four factors are laid out in the Report as the major determinants of reform performance: a) the demand from society, b) prospect EU access, c) resistance of bureaucracy, especially TAF, d) hindering effect of PKK-led terrorism. This reform initiative

<sup>457</sup>See the full text of Article 90 of Turkish Constitution here: <https://www.anayasa.gov.tr/tr/mevzuat/anayasa/>. The article, in its amended form, stipulates that once an international agreement is endorsed by the Turkish Parliament, no further legislation is required in its implementation. Last accessed on 01.05.2020

<sup>458</sup>See the country-based breakdown of the decisions made by ECHR throughout its history: [https://www.echr.coe.int/Documents/Overview\\_19592019\\_ENG.pdf](https://www.echr.coe.int/Documents/Overview_19592019_ENG.pdf), last accessed on 03.05.2020

<sup>459</sup> See page 646 of Freedom in the World 2005 Report here: [https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/2020-2/Freedom\\_in\\_the\\_World\\_2005\\_complete\\_book.pdf](https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/2020-2/Freedom_in_the_World_2005_complete_book.pdf), last accessed on 07.05.2020

<sup>460</sup>See pages 429-434 of HRW World Report 2005 for the full report on Turkey: [https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/world\\_report\\_download/wr2005.pdf](https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/world_report_download/wr2005.pdf), last accessed on 18.05.2020.

fell short of a full de-securitization in freedom of expression, because the repressive articles 159 and 312 of the Criminal Code were used with the pretext of insulting state institutions and inciting hatred in society. Interestingly, the HRW falls apart with ECHR who decided in 2004 in favour of headscarf ban<sup>461</sup> of the secularist establishment of Turkey. While the ECHR ruled that the headscarf ban at universities was not discriminatory and breach of religious freedom, the HRW stood at the opposite end of the ruling.<sup>462</sup>

### **Brief Assessment of Reforms in 2006**

The 2006 Report criticizes the broadening of the definition of terrorism in Anti-terror Law and restrictions imposed on suspects, such as denial of lawyer for 24 hours. On the other side, establishment of an ombudsman that would watch over people's complaints from bureaucratic dealings is applauded as a requirement of accession. Top military officers maintained influence on civilian politics through expressing their opinions on debated issues such as; the Kurdish issue, secularism and Cyprus talks, despite the institutional changes on the structure of MGK. While the implementation of ECHR is applauded in the 2006 Report, maintenance of restrictions on the expression of non-violent ideas by the infamous Article 301 of the Penal Code is criticized.<sup>463</sup> As for cultural rights 2 private television channels were given permission of broadcast in Kurdish, with time limitations and mandatory subtitle in Turkish. However, "the situation in the South-East has deteriorated since the resumption of violence by the PKK, which is on the EU list of terrorist organisations".<sup>464</sup>

2006 Report mentions a slow-down in reforms in simultaneity with the increase in PKK violence. Freedom of media was mentioned as an area of improvement, yet, the Report also mentions that "Prime Minister Erdoğan launched defamation suits against several members of the media in 2005, including two cartoonists who were sentenced to pay fines"<sup>465</sup>. On the face of well-established-denial of cultural rights of Kurds, the AKP government

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<sup>461</sup>"The court found that Turkey didn't violate the ECHR's 9th Article on religious freedom. Jurists interpreted the verdict as ECHR found restricted freedom enough for Turkey". See for details here: <http://bianet.org/english/politics/38027-echr-rules-for-turkish-headscarf-ban>, last accessed on 18.05.2020.

<sup>462</sup>See page 433 of 2005 Report.

<sup>463</sup> See pages 5-9 of 2006 Regular Report Turkey From the Commission on Turkey's Progress Towards Accession at: [https://www.avrupa.info.tr/sites/default/files/2016-11/Turkey\\_progress\\_report%202006.pdf](https://www.avrupa.info.tr/sites/default/files/2016-11/Turkey_progress_report%202006.pdf), last accessed on 03.05.2020

<sup>464</sup>See page 22 of 2006 Report.

<sup>465</sup> See page 731 of Freedom in the World 2006 Report here: [https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/2020-02/Freedom\\_in\\_the\\_World\\_2006\\_complete\\_book.pdf](https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/2020-02/Freedom_in_the_World_2006_complete_book.pdf), last accessed on 09.05.2020

allowed opening private schools and courses that would teach Kurdish language, Turkish still being mandatory. This, obviously, was a significant de-securitization step on the identity politics of Turkey. The Report underlines the presence of recriminations that securitize the freedom of expression on controversial issues such as; Armenian issue of 1915, Cyprus issue and “denigration of Turkishness”. Orhan Pamuk, Turkish Nobel prize winner in literature, for example, was prosecuted because of the comments he gave to a Swiss media organ, and many others were kept under pressure with broad and vague accusations.

The 2006 HRW Report emphasizes the tension between government reforms and a resistant bureaucracy. Referring the decrease in torture and ill treatment in police custody as the major development of the year, it mentions that very little progress was made on freedom of expression and language freedom. The fact that “women who wear headscarf for religious reasons continue to be excluded from higher education, the civil service, and political life”<sup>466</sup> is mentioned as a major hindrance on the full enjoyment of civil and political rights. The 2006 Report complains about the language issues that the Kurds and Lazsface and criticizes the unwarranted and disproportional use of force by the police alongside Erdoğan’s support for them.

A comprehensive report prepared in 2006 by TESEV indicated how AKP’s presence in power and its de-securitizing discourse on religious practice had a moderating effect on conservative masses. The perception of being oppressed drew back from 42% in 1999 to 17% in 2006 among religious people.<sup>467</sup> Another indicator is on the TAF’s decreasing role as protector of secularism. While 25% of Turkish population believed that secularism needed TAF’s protection, 54% believes there is no need for such a protection and secularism is best protected in democratic politics. This decreasing role or rather public demand for TAF to be the protector of the secular system indicates that the AKP’s reformist agenda ameliorated the threat perception among secular segments of the society and shrank the space for intervention by TAF into civilian politics. Another indicator of decrease turned up in the established perception of terror threat in society. An open-ended question on “the most important question of Turkey” in the survey demonstrated that unemployment took the lead with 38% while terrorism-national security-Kurdish issue got only 14%.

### **Brief Assessment of Reforms in 2007**

<sup>466</sup>See page 496 of HRW World Report 2006 here:

[https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/world\\_report\\_download/wr2006.pdf](https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/world_report_download/wr2006.pdf), last accessed on 18.05.2020.

<sup>467</sup>Çarkoğlu Ali, Toprak Binnaz, *Değişen Türkiye’de Din Toplum ve Siyaset*, (Religion Society and Politics in Changing Turkey), TESEV Report, İstanbul, 2006, available on TESEV’s website.

The 2007 Report brings the presidential election that was held in April 2007 and TAF's intervention into political debate with a memorandum on its website to the fore. AKP's management of the crises that erupted in the run-up of presidential election and the maintenance of the democratic system on the face of the military memorandum were appreciated in the Report. However, the Report also underlines a stagnation even retreat in reformist agenda: "No change has been made to the Turkish Armed Forces Internal Service Law and the law on the National Security Council... No progress has been made in terms of strengthening parliamentary oversight of the military budget and expenditure...Overall; no progress has been made in ensuring full civilian supervisory functions over the military and parliamentary oversight of defence expenditure."<sup>468</sup> Despite some progress in judicial reform, "tensions in the relations between the government and the judiciary have not been conducive to the smooth and effective functioning of the system. More needs to be done in terms of strengthening the independence and impartiality of the judiciary."<sup>469</sup> Corruption is also mentioned as widespread as no significant improvement has been made in the issue. While the ratification of the ECHR on the issues pertaining to human rights is recognized, the deficits in the enforcement of ECHR decisions are also noted in the 2007 Report. "As regards freedom of expression, including the media, open debate continued in the Turkish media on a wide range of issues...yet, the prosecution and conviction for the expression of non-violent opinions under certain provisions of the Turkish Criminal Code are a cause of serious concern...that the Turkish legal system does not fully guarantee freedom of expression in line with European standards."<sup>470</sup>

The Report also underlines the presence of a legal framework in terms of protection of women yet reiterates the need to translate it into a social reality. In terms of cultural rights, neither with the issues of religious minorities<sup>471</sup> and promotion of cultural diversity nor on the use of languages other than Turkish, no progress has been made in 2007. Furthermore, "no steps have been taken to develop a comprehensive strategy to achieve economic and social

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<sup>468</sup> See pages 9 of 2007 Regular Report Turkey From the Commission on Turkey's Progress Towards Accession at: <https://www.avrupa.info.tr/sites/default/files/2016-11/progress-reports-2007-en.pdf>, last accessed on 04.05.2020

<sup>469</sup> See page 10 of 2007 Report.

<sup>470</sup> See pages 14-15 of 2007 Report.

<sup>471</sup> Akgönül Samim, "Minority Issue in Turkey Under the Light of International Standards", *Alternatif Politika*, vol. 7, no. 2, 2015, p. 210-229. As Akgönül discloses; minority issue was framed in Turkey by the Lausanne Treaty (1923) within the system of League of Nations which renders rather obsolete by current understanding of the issue that is framed by European Council. While no specific group was mentioned in the Treaty, the practical framing of minority in the habitus of Turkish Republic was kept limited to Jews, Greeks and Armenians which together constitute largest non-Muslim population.



development in the region and to create the conditions required for the Kurdish population to enjoy full rights and freedoms”<sup>472</sup>. The government is acclaimed for creating an investment friendly atmosphere and maintaining the market forces competitive enough to endure possible pressures from the EU access. All in all, the 2007 Report indicates a stagnation of reforms in areas such as; cultural rights (especially that of Kurds), implementation of Anti-Terror Law and judicial independence. While it appreciates the ratification of ECHR decisions and the legal framework of women’s right, it criticizes the lack of enforcement in both issues.

2007 Report of HRW underscores that the AKP government failed to implement key reforms necessary to consolidate the protection of human rights largely because of the resistance of the bureaucratic apparatus. The increase in indiscriminate and disproportional use of police force was legally backed by an amendment in Anti-Terror Law that enabled police to use immediate lethal force.<sup>473</sup> The Report however, applauds permission for one-hour-a-day television broadcasting in Kurdish despite the fact that the other major issues of cultural rights remained untouched. Mentioning the visit of Martin Scheinin, the UN rapporteur on human rights, to Southeast Turkey, the Report conveys his comments that, “certain counter-terrorism measures taken by the State may have consequences that are incompatible with human rights”<sup>474</sup> and complains that the definition of terrorism in Anti-Terror Law was too broad and vague.

### **2.6.2.3. Overall Evaluation of AKP’s Reforms between 2002 and 2007**

The prospect of EU membership has provided a stronger motive for democratic reforms than the domestic demand in Turkey in 2000s. However, absence of a viable anti-EU or anti-reformist politics and AKP’s increasing support as the main propagator of the reform agenda disclose that the reform process has been appreciated by the voter. In the same vein, the de-securitization policies have been largely fuelled by EU access reforms and were appreciated by a majority of Turkish voter, which is, again, indicated by AKP’s increasing electoral support. If the electoral support were hypothetically broken down there would be seen an alignment of voter preferences that brings together economic and political stability, religious freedom and counterbalancing of the secularist establishment. Prospect EU membership, perhaps was regarded as the facilitator of all these demands by the conservative

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<sup>472</sup> See page 23 of 2007 Report.

<sup>473</sup> See page 425 of HRW World Report 2007 here: <https://www.hrw.org/legacy/wr2k7/wr2007master.pdf>, last accessed 18.05.2020.

<sup>474</sup> See page 429 of HRW World Report 2007.



voter. However, in the absence of quantitative data, this qualitative argument does not weigh much more than speculation.

As the Progress Reports of pre-AKP period (1998-2002) indicate, the AKP inherited a *momentum of reformism* from the previous government and as the Reports of the first AKP period (2002-2007) indicate, the Party has placed significant political will behind it, took it to further levels and has been appreciated by the EU for its overall performance. In the Reports, issues around the *free exercise of human rights* constituted the major line of criticism and recommendations by the EU to Turkish side. The reforms conducted in legislative, administrative and institutional dimensions have been praised by the EU yet the need for further accomplishment and actual implementation has been reminded. Anti-terror Law, a major tool of securitization for the Turkish state has been mentioned multiple times as a major systemic hindrance for the full exercise of basic rights and freedoms. Interestingly, the broad and vague definition of terrorism in the text of this Law largely remained unchanged despite other accomplishments in human rights issues. On the issue of PKK, the EU recognizes the PKK as a terrorist organization, yet criticizes some practices of Turkish security apparatus, such as forced displacement and denial of cultural and linguistic rights. The change of MGK's structure and reduction of its authority are appreciated in the context of civilian supervision over the TAF, yet it has not been enough to confine the TAF to the barracks, that is to say, the leading military officers maintained vocal on major political debates. Endorsement of supremacy of ECHR decision over national courts has been another important step in terms of legal de-securitization as it provided a higher reference for democratic rights and made it more difficult to violate them by the authorities. As many of the practices criticized in the Progress Reports were constructions of the secularist bureaucracy, there have been irreconcilable differences between the EU norms and security and control oriented habitus of Turkish secularist camp. This was a major reason for EU's enthusiasm to work with AKP-led conservatism that championed a pro-Western democratic reform agenda.

## **Conclusion**

Recognizing and exploiting the opportunity space in Turkish politics at the beginning of 2000s, the AKP came to power with the re-orientation and credibility of its leadership, especially that of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. As it moved towards centre, it embraced a reformist and pro-EU politics and as the observations exhibited in EU Progress Reports and other monitoring NGOs, it carried out a substantial amount of change on the face of the resistance

of the secularist establishment. Most items in the reform requirements of the EU stipulated disarticulation of bureaucratic tutelage in Turkey in systemic terms and this fell in line with the interests of the AKP since it was restricted and at times threatened by the very same tutelage. The reform agenda was existential for the AKP to *contain and disarticulate the tutelary bureaucratic power* and to consolidate its popular support. Disarticulation of bureaucratic tutelage has been done in the context of democratization, which can be used synonymously with expansion of public space that co-extends with de-securitization of issues that were previously securitized by the secularist establishment. Therefore, de-securitization was an existential political framework for the Party, and whether it had a marriage of convenience with that framework is examined in the following parts of the thesis. In other words, how it proceeded on the axis of securitization after it started establishing itself further in the political space is the scrutiny of the following parts. In a nutshell, a brief evaluation of this period seeks the practices of securitization through, a) strategic aims and gains, b) construction of threat, c) target groups, d) discourse and orientation. Therefore, with the following elaborations on these items, Chapter 1 of Part 2 of the thesis concludes.

#### **a. Strategic Aims and Gains**

The Islamist roots of the AKP leadership constituted the major source for the suspicions of secularist establishment. Having consolidated a significant public support, perhaps, has turned this suspicion into a clear and present threat perception. The AKP leadership however, had learned from the traumatic experiences of its Islamist past, and was fully aware of the fact that the establishment had both the will and capacity to remove the Party from the political space. With this in mind, Erdoğan and his comrades avoided confrontation with the establishment at all costs in their first executive term. Establishing in the political space and consolidating further were the primary strategic aims of this period coupled with a strategy of patience. To this end, the AKP declared allegiance to secularism with an emphasis on freedom of religious practice at individual level. Moderate politics was the only way to build a broad electoral base and avoid the wrath of the establishment, thus, they moderated. In the process of moderation, the AKP did not disclose the philosophical or political underpinnings of the paradigm change on which it was built -with aim of being a catch-all party- and followed a path of strategic ambiguity. The leadership was pragmatic and strong enough to create a political gravity out of conservative democracy, with which the AKP identified itself. Doing this, the Party did not exclude the Islamist voter and infused their values into its newly crafted conservatism and counterbalanced it with liberal-leaning EU reforms.

The leadership was in full recognition that the secularist establishment was posing an undeniable systemic threat to their government. Therefore, they felt compelled to contain and disarticulate the establishment, and used the EU reforms as an external leverage for this purpose. As the reforms stipulated strengthening democracy, they favoured popularly elected government for legitimacy purposes and the AKP turned the reform process into discursive and political shield contra establishment. Championing the reforms, it has been able to change the structure of the hammerhead institution of the establishment; MGK, in its favour, removed the DGMs and dragged the previously securitized issues such as conservative lifestyle and Kurdish issue to the field of public debate. Managing the crises triggered by the establishment, especially in 2007, successfully, the AKP not only expanded its sphere of authority but also levelled the political playground in favour of civilian politics. All things considered, the Party has consolidated itself further in its first term in power and weakened the secularist establishment through a politics of de-securitization.

#### **b. Construction of Threat**

In this period the AKP did not create any significant threat concept and focused on economic and political stability through fiscal discipline and de-securitization of major issues of Republican history; the Kurdish issue and the suppression of conservative lifestyle in the public space. These two issues were defined as the major threats to the country's territorial integrity and the civic identity promoted by the secularist Republican elite. AKP tried to bring these issue into the discussions of the political space, that is to say, tried to re-politicize them. In other words, it tried to turn these issues into matters of democratic debate, in which, it stood a much better chance than any of its competitors because of the popular support in enjoyed. Thus, AKP's efforts of de-securitization are underpinned by the advantages that it had in the public and political space.

On the issue of public religiosity the AKP followed a strategy of patience relying on the satisfaction that it instilled among its electorate with the fact that a religious Prime Minister was running the country. The very presence of the AKP leadership as a conservative-religious cadre in the secularist state settings created a clear satisfaction among its voter base. In this period, the AKP kept the issue of religiosity in the *private realm of the publicly visible leaders*, and framed the discussions on religious representation in the public space as a matter of freedom of religious practice, avoiding any policy or discourse that would invoke a perception of fundamental transformation by the hands of the state.

On the Kurdish issue, the Party followed a politics of ebb and flow, swinging between a conservative nationalism and democratic reformism. It had to put into account not only the restrictions of the secularist bureaucracy but also the sensitivities of a nationalist-conservative electorate. On the one side Erdoğan officially acknowledged the issue with its name, “the Kurdish issue” and going further, he apologized for the past mistakes of the authorities. Lifting the ban on Kurdish broadcast indicated that the AKP actually went beyond giving lip service to the demands of the Kurds and put the issue into legislative agenda. On the other side it had to respond to the established demands of security that were historically built on undermining the demands of the Kurds. Despite all the inconsistencies –or rather search for a balanced policy to appeal to broad masses- the Party followed a revisionist policy and de-securitized the Kurdish issue in substantial ways.

### **c. Target Groups**

Primary target group in terms of electoral audience was the conservative voter for the AKP. Their successful persuasion brought the Party to power and maintained there. Two things came to the fore in this persuasion: First, effective leadership with a charismatic representation of conservative values in the persona of Erdoğan; Second, economic stability through fiscal discipline. Among the conservative voter, a significant amount of Kurds found *preferable representation* in the AKP, since the Party did not follow the exclusionary identity politics of the secularist establishment. Erdoğan did not position Kurdish identity contra Turkish-official identity in the discursive context of multiple ethnicities of the country, and this had a legitimating effect for Kurdish demands in the eyes of the public. In brief, despite the resistance of the secularist establishment, Kurdish issue and public manifestations of Islam were brought to the agenda of public debate, that is to say, both are substantially de-securitized in this period<sup>475</sup>. In its policy of avoidance of confrontation with the establishment that has been sceptical about the Party’s loyalty to Republican values, the AKP tried to win their acceptance aligning with their sensitivities as much as possible, at least at the discursive level. At the international level, the AKP created legitimacy for its rule with its market-friendly EU championship and non-isolationist foreign policy. In this period, the Party has not categorically targeted any specific group in an exclusionary manner.

### **d. Discourses and Orientations**

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<sup>475</sup>Akgönül Samim, Oran Baskın, “Turkish Politics: Structures and Dynamics”, Özerdem A., Whiting M., (eds), *The Routledge Handbook of Turkish Politics*, New York, Routledge, 2019, p. 22.

AKP was founded on a paradigm change and rapid re-orientation as examined at the end of Part 1. It employed a moderate discourse with inclusionary attitude towards social diversity and a pragmatic and reconciliatory one towards the country's bureaucratic powerhouse. The discourse of conservative democracy was shaped by an expansion of public space for religious practice through promoting it in the framework of individual liberties. Yet, the Party has never offered or promoted a total democratization or de-securitization of the public space, and given blind eye to the rights of groups such as LGBTI and Alevis. Since EU access requirements provided leverage for the expansion of democratic debate and containment of the secularist establishment, the Party embraced the EU reforms like a lifeline. In short, the AKP established itself as a pro-EU conservative democrat mass party with a moderate discourse. While Islam remained to be a major content provider for the discourse and policies of the Party, it has not become a political form-maker. All in all, the Party closed this period far stronger than it started: it has placed the second man of the Party in Presidency, won against the full court press of the secularist establishment and enjoyed a landslide election victory at the end of its first term.

## Chapter 2

### Consolidation of Power and Disarticulation of Secularist Establishment (2007-2011)

The AKP came out of the turmoil of 2007 victorious in many aspects: First, it realized its own overall capacity contra secularist establishment, which was the only viable opponent in terms of power struggle. Therefore, the Party did not only increase its vote share from 2002 to 2007 but also its confidence as a powerhouse. Second, the popular support of the AKP did not melt through its clashes with the secularist establishment as it happened in the February 28 process with the Welfare Party. The tests that it went through in 2007 demonstrated that the Party had established firm roots in the electorate which paid off with a significant increase in its votes in the elections that took place immediately after the crisis. Third, seeing the aggregate capacity of the establishment in bureaucracy, media and party politics, the AKP demystified it and found itself well-positioned to launch counter attacks in the newly started term. Fourth, starting the *Ergenekon* trial against the strongest element in the establishment, the military, it gave signals of potency and started the new term (2007-2011) on moral-psychological high grounds. As all these proved, the AKP had obtained power, and the new term would exhibit further consolidation of its power and broader disarticulation of the establishment.

In this term, Turkey witnessed AKP's further push on the secularist establishment to disarticulate it. Erdoğan not only publicly supported the *Ergenekon* case but also broadened it with another case in the same spirit; the Sledgehammer (*Balyoz*) Case. Perhaps the last counter attack of the establishment also came in this period in the form of closure case by Supreme Court of Appeals. Amidst all these ebb and flow, the AKP launched the biggest de-

securitization of the Republican history towards Kurds, which inspired hope on the political solution of the issue. Learning its lesson from the closure case, and harvesting the fruits of its initial strategy of patience, the AKP moved for a systemic change with the Constitutional Referendum in this period and created results that meant systemic takeover in any practical sense.

This period also indicated the symbiotic relationship between the AKP and Gülen Movement, in which the former has been able to do many things in the framework of disarticulation of the establishment with the help of the latter. The latter in return expanded its activities in civilian realm and further staffed in bureaucracy, both at unprecedented levels. Yet, the short-lived symbiosis would also start wearing out in this period, yet the discord was kept at a manageable elevation by both sides, just to be restarted in the following period. The symbiosis and the following struggle between the two are of key importance as they shaped Turkish political scene for almost a decade and a half. Regarding the EU access reforms, this period exhibited ebb and flow and perhaps, it can best be defined as a period of stagnation in terms of reformism. The period between 2007 and 2011, then, eventually ended with a landslide election victory of the AKP, after which it would go increasingly authoritarian.

### **2.2.1 Judiciary: *The New Battlefield and War of Cadres***

The 2007-2011 term of the AKP was predominantly shaped by the “power struggle through judiciary” between the establishment and the Party. Both sides of the struggle used their cadres within the judicial structure of the country to bear political results. While the secularist establishment had a historically formed domination, especially in high judiciary, the AKP utilized the cadres of Gülen Movement in local courts in bold moves against the military wing of the establishment in this struggle that can fairly be framed as “war of cadres through judiciary”. Gülen Movement’s support for the AKP was not limited to employing its judicial apparatus as it also promoted the *Ergenekon* and *Balyoz* cases and the Constitutional referendum using its media. While the AKP, as the executive branch of the government, did not have a direct and official involvement in the cases of *Ergenekon* and *Balyoz* cases, yet both discourse and policies that Erdoğan followed about the cases indicated that they were party to them. Erdoğan’s public support for the trials reached the level of declaring himself as the prosecutor of the cases.<sup>476</sup>

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<sup>476</sup>Gazete Vatan, 'Evet Ergenekon'un savcısıyım', (Yes, I am the Prosecutor of Ergenekon), 2008, available here: <http://www.gazetevatan.com/-evet-ergenekon-un-savcisiyim--189246-siyaset/>, last accessed on 21.06.2020.

In response to the *Ergenekon* trial the establishment opened a closure case for the AKP in 2008 through the Chief Prosecutor of the Supreme Court of Appeals (*Yargıtay*) with the allegations that “the Party had become the focal point of acts against secularism”<sup>477</sup>. In 2010, when the *Ergenekon* case, the AKP’s move against the establishment was going on, the closure case had ended in AKP’s favour. Being emboldened by this result, the Party took a giant further step and opened yet another case against military wing of the establishment, the *Balyoz* trials. The case was opened with harsh allegations that an organized group within TAF was preparing for a military coup after serious political provocations they planned; such as, bombing a mosque and downing a Turkish warplane in Greek air space.<sup>478</sup> Although *Ergenekon* and *Balyoz* cases were decided upon after this term (2013 and 2012 consecutively), the cases shaped both the alliance (with Gülenists) and antagonism (for the establishment) of the AKP in its second term. Therefore, each three cases, *Ergenekon*, *Balyoz* and the Closure Case of the AKP deserve elaboration for their political ramifications.

### 2.2.1.1 The *Ergenekon* Case: *Disarticulation of What?*

According to the 2455 page-long indictment of the *Ergenekon* case, which consisted of mainly newspaper clippings, the members of the organisation acted in secrecy to ripen the conditions for a military intervention and undermine the AKP government. The *Ergenekon* network is defined as a terrorist organisation that functioned in an extra-legal *modus operandi* with the claims of public service and protection of the state and society. The allegations had that it also aimed at undermining state institutions and used civil society organisations for its purposes. According to the indictment, the *Ergenekon* network aimed at “creating deficits of government and chaos to undermine public order, which eventually targets justification in public for an extra-legal (military) intervention”<sup>479</sup>.

The rationale behind the struggle for the AKP was that once it justified the prosecution, it could mobilize all vehicles of law enforcement against a functioning agent of the establishment. This would not only bear substantial results favouring the AKP in overall power relations but also could be used for mobilizing anti-militarist sensitivity in the society.

<sup>477</sup>DeutscheWelle, *AKP’ye kapatma davası açıldı* (Closure Case Opened Against AKP), 2008, DeutscheWelle, available here: <https://www.dw.com/tr/akpye-kapatma-davas%C4%B1-a%C3%A7%C4%B1d%C4%B1/a-3192923>, last accessed on 21.06.2020.

<sup>478</sup>Bianet, “*Balyoz Davası*” *Nedir?* (What is the “Balyoz Case?”), 2010, Bianet, available here: <http://bianet.org/bianet/hukuk/140996-balyoz-davasi-nedir>, last accessed on 21.06.2020.

<sup>479</sup>Milliyet, *Ergenekon İddianamesinde İlginç Ayrıntılar Şok Suçlamalar* (Interesting Details and Shocking Accusations in Ergenekon Indictment), Milliyet, 2008. Available here: <https://www.milliyet.com.tr/gundem/ergenekon-iddianamesinde-ilginc-ayrintilar-sok-suclamalar-97104>, last accessed on 24.06.2020



The anti-militarist sensitivity was high among the conservative masses as religious restriction imposed upon the public space by 1997 intervention had alienated them from the Army. Therefore, Erdoğan declared himself as the prosecutor of the case, resembled it to *Mani Pulite* (Clean Hands) operations that had born great political change in Italy, and asked for respect to the prosecutors in Turkey that ran the *Ergenekon* trials<sup>480</sup>. Deniz Baykal, then the chairman of CHP as the political representative of the secularist camp, claimed that the process was being run by Erdoğan and added; “if he is the prosecutor of the case, then I am its defence attorney”<sup>481</sup>.

Erdoğan posed himself as the prosecutor of the case because the popular support that he enjoyed because of the case was higher than the blames for intervening into a judicial process. The Vice Prime Minister of the time, Bülent Arınç went further and defined the trial process as, “Turkey is cleaning its intestines”. Yalçın Akdoğan, who penned the book; *Muhafazakar Demokrasia* the new identity of the AKP in 2004 and was regarded as the political philosopher of the Party, portrayed *Ergenekon* trials as “the largest and most important legal reckoning of the Republican history” and claimed that “a certain mindset has been purged through judiciary”. The spokesperson of the AKP, Hüseyin Çelik expressed the perspective of his Party on *Ergenekon* as; “mercy for the wolf is persecution for the lamb”<sup>482</sup>.

The level of engagement and support that the AKP placed behind the trials suggest that *the case was politically fuelled even if it is legally justifiable*. Furthermore, the expressions of AKP leadership that portrayed the trials as a purge through judicial process implies that they are the driving engine themselves who exploit the influence that they exercise over the judiciary. This could fairly be regarded as a confession of judicial intervention. Perhaps repulsing the secularist establishment’s onslaughts in 2007 had given the AKP necessary confidence to have a bolder stance. Yet, despite the excesses of government in terms of separation of power, *Ergenekon* trials do not render meaningless or can be discredited altogether in terms of democratization of Turkey.<sup>483</sup>

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<sup>480</sup>Hürriyet, *Temiz Eller Operasyonu Yapanlara Saygı Duyun* (Respect Those Who Run the Clean Hands Operation), Hürriyet, 2009. Available here: <https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/temiz-eller-operasyonu-yapanlara-saygi-duyun-10803877>, last accessed on 25.06.2020.

<sup>481</sup>Hürriyet, *Baykal: Başbakan Savcıysa Ben de Avukatım* (If the Prime Minister is the Prosecutor then I am the Defence Attorney), 2008, Hürriyet. Available here: <https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/baykal-basbakan-savciysa-ben-de-avukatim-9356514>, last accessed on 24.06.2020

<sup>482</sup>Sözcü, *Ergenekon için Kim Ne Demişti?*, (Who Said What on Eergenekon?), Sözcü, 2016, available here: <https://www.sozcu.com.tr/2016/gundem/ergenekon-icin-kim-ne-demisti-1195230/>, last accessed on 25.06.2020.

<sup>483</sup>Akgönül Samim, *Üç Ergenekon*, (Three Ergenekons), Radikal, 2009, available here: <http://www.radikal.com.tr/radikal2/uc-ergenekon-919627/>, last accessed on 23.08.2020.

All in all, after the general elections of 2007, Erdoğan came to a persuasion that with the popular support that the AKP enjoyed and the bureaucratic support of the Gülen Movement, he could eliminate the military tutelage. A strong critic of both the AKP and the Gülen Movement, Ahmet Şık claims that “AKP’s biggest partner in government between 2007 and 2012 was the Gülen Movement... The only good that came out of this entire process was that the military was pushed back inside its rightful boundaries. But there was a problem: counter guerrillas had been eliminated using counter guerrilla-style measures. For this reason, what was achieved cannot in any sense be called ‘democracy’. A new kind of tutelage, far weightier, replaced that of the military.”<sup>484</sup> The unfolding of the events in later years would prove Şık correct. The scope and nature of the relationship as alliance and antagonism are expanded in the next Chapters.

The second indictment of *Ergenekon* case included the “Coups Diaries” that was published by the weekly magazine *Nokta*. The magazine leaked the diaries kept by then Navy Commander Özden Örnek, which included two coup plans in 2004; *Sarıköz* (Blondie) and *Ayışığı* (Moonlight). The diaries disclosed that the *Ergenekon* network could not act in chain of command in TAF because of then Chief of General Staff, Hilmi Özkök, who was regarded as a pro-democracy soldier by the proponents of the *Ergenekon* case, yet a *dinci* (Islamist) by the opponents of it, including the high ranking generals that allegedly planned for coups in 2004.<sup>485</sup>

The liberal luminaries also supported the *Ergenekon* trials and provided critical intellectual and moral support for the prosecution. In 2008, 300 liberal-leaning figures from academia to media, bar associations and civil society signed a petition urging to deepen and broaden the trials: “For years, the darkness cast upon our country through unsolved murders, political assassinations, the gangs within the state, provocations to incite hatred in society, and open and covert military coups could be torn as the *Ergenekon* trials would pave the way for democracy... We urge all the citizens... to listen to their reason and conscience and support this case.”<sup>486</sup> A self-criticism came after almost a decade by a leading liberal journalist, Cengiz Çandar who argued that the liberals turned a blind eye to the injustices committed by the

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<sup>484</sup>Şık Ahmet et al., “The Gülen Community and the AKP”, Özyürek Esra et al. (eds.) *Authoritarianism and Resistance in Turkey: Conversations on Democratic and Social Challenges*, New York, Springer, 2019, p. 86.

<sup>485</sup>T24, *Darbe Günlüklerinin Tam Metni*, (Full Text of Coup Diaries), T24, 2009, available here: <https://t24.com.tr/haber/darbe-gunluklerinin-tam-metni,47556>, last accessed on 25.06.2020.

<sup>486</sup>Habertürk, *300 Aydından Bildiri* (Declaration from 300 Intellectuals), 2008, Habertürk, available here: <https://www.haberturk.com/gundem/haber/91132-300-aydindan-bildiri>, last accessed on 25.06.2020.

prosecution. Having the persuasion that it was the Gülenists in the law enforcement who conducted the investigation and the unfair methods that they used almost acquitted the coup plotters in the scope of *Ergenekon*, which he was convinced, was a real phenomenon.<sup>487</sup>

As the petition suggests the liberals shared a conviction that the trials aimed at removing the extra-legal restrictions imposed on democratic politics and rule of law. In other words, the trials targeted a major organized group within the secularist establishment that securitized Turkey for a long time. Therefore the *Ergenekon* trials were perceived by the aforementioned liberals who supported the trials as a significant accomplishment of de-securitization. However, “the judicial procedure in the case so far has been marred by deficiencies and outright violations of human rights that undermine its legality...several of the suspects have been held in detention for a long period of time without any charges being brought against them, that wire-tapping has been indiscriminate and used without due consideration to the right of privacy of citizens, that the records of the wire-tapping have been disseminated in the media, and that the prosecution relies heavily on secret witnesses.”<sup>488</sup> This perspective puts forward that the *Ergenekon* trials were nothing more than a stage in a political battle as they were fuelled by political antagonism rather than a commitment to democracy.

Once considered in the light of; violations of law during the trials, extremely long detention of the defendants without indictment, absence of accompanying democratic reforms, following remissions of the sentences due to the changing relations and alliance of Erdoğan with ultranationalist branch of the secularist establishment, Erdoğan’s claims of being deceived by the Gülenist conspiracy about the *Ergenekon* trials and the authoritarian turn in the absence of a rival powerhouse in the country contra AKP, it would be fair to claim that the case was designated as a judicial counter attack led by Erdoğan and supported by Gülenists and liberal luminaries. An organized and functioning group within the secularist establishment was not only disarticulated but also publicly humiliated and judicially abused with long term detentions. Yet as the following events unfolded, the disarticulation of the *Ergenekon* network, a vehicle of securitization, does not necessitate a systemic de-securitization or expansion of democratic space.

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<sup>487</sup>Özvarış Hazel, *Cengiz Çandar: Siyasi İslam’ın Otokrasiye Evrimini Göremedik*, (Cengiz Çandar: We Failed to See Political Islam’s Evolution into Autocracy), T24, 2016, available here: <https://t24.com.tr/haber/cengiz-candar-siyasi-islam-in-otokrasiye-evrimini-goremedik-ergenekon-ve-balyoz-ihlallerine-duyarli-davranmadik-pismanim,335887>, last accessed on 25.06.2020.

<sup>488</sup>Karaveli Halil M., “Ergenekon Trial: Breaking With The Deep State Past, Or Are The Tables Simply Turned?”, *The Turkey Analyst*, vol. 1, no. 16, 2008.

### 2.2.1.2 AKP Closure Case: *The Counter-attack and Further Defeat of the Establishment*

Since the establishment failed in Republican protests, e-memorandum and general elections in 2007, that is to say in its full court press against the AKP, it resorted to the last remaining instrument that it could mobilize; the Party closure. Various Islamist, socialist and pro-Kurdish parties had been closed down by the Constitutional Court in Republican history without significant reaction from the public. Furthermore, existing perception about the “hidden Islamist agenda” of the AKP would create serious support from the secular electorate. Yet, the AKP enjoyed a far greater electoral support compared to previous Islamist (NOM) parties and it had a pragmatic leadership who had the conviction that backtracking from the struggle with the secularist establishment would not elongate its survival.

The establishment moved to close the Party in March 2008 with an indictment put together by the chief public prosecutor, Abdurrahman Yalçınkaya, based on the allegations that “the party had become the focal point of anti-secular activities”. The indictment also demanded the political ban of the AKP leadership including Recep Tayyip Erdoğan as the Prime Minister and Abdullah Gül as the President of Turkey.<sup>489</sup> The demands on ban and closure represented an *extreme effort of securitization* as they aimed at closing the political field altogether for the leadership of the Party that won the election by a significant margin. The chief prosecutor used a presumptive language in the indictment and said; “the Party acted through *taqiyya* (deception through posing otherwise) and social agreement aiming for first moderate Islam and then a Sharia rule” and argued that the Republic was in an unprecedented danger.<sup>490</sup>

The alleged practice of *taqiyya* is strongly linked with the restrictive secularism of Turkey that did not allow Islamist policies to run for government. Accordingly, the Islamists hid their real agenda and acted in more acceptable ways to legitimize themselves in the eyes of both the state and their electoral base without internalizing these ways for a limited time and in a tactical manner. There is a reference to such an act in Chapter 3 Verse 28 of Quran which reads as follows: “The believers must not establish friendship with the unbelievers in

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<sup>489</sup>Anadolu Agency, *Ak Parti Hakkında Kapatma Davası*, (Closure Case for the AKP), 2008, Anadolu Agency, available here: <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/arsiv/ak-parti-hakkinda-kapatma-davasi/428262>, last accessed on 27.06.2020.

<sup>490</sup>Bianet, *AKP Kapatma İddianamesinin Tam Metni* (Full text of Closure Indictment for the AKP), 2008, Bianet, available here: <http://m.bianet.org/bianet/siyaset/105636-akp-ye-kapatma-iddianamesinin-tam-metni>, last accessed on 27.06.2020.

preference to the faithful. Whoever does so has nothing to hope for from God unless he does it out of fear or taqiyah (pious dissimulation). God warns you about Himself. To God do all things return.”<sup>491</sup> This verse seems to justify misrepresentation of the real intention in the case of perceived threat. So the claims of the Chief Prosecutor relate to this verse that the AKP was “pretending to promote” pro-Western democratic politics until it gains enough power to assert its real agenda. As the AKP abandoned democratic reforms in later periods, the Chief Prosecutor’s claims turned out correct in its reading but lacked depth. The AKP had declared a pro-democracy stance not in just a *tactical* hide but in a *strategic* positioning to consolidate itself and disarticulate its major threat; the secularist establishment.

At the tactical level, the AKP leadership acted to de-escalate the tension with a confident caution that they gained in the victories of 2007. Abdullah Gül, for example, maintained his non-partisan attitude as the President must be by the Turkish Constitution and said: “I represent the unity of Turkey and consider short, medium and long term interests of Turkey. The pros and cons of closing down a government party with a heavy majority must be well considered.” The vice chairman of CHP, Mustafa Özyürek defended the prosecution and argued that the CHP did find party closures correct, yet, “if a political party committed a crime, the Chief prosecutor has to do his job. It is so unfortunate for a political party to lower itself as such...They are pushing the boundaries of the regime and the Constitution”.<sup>492</sup> Obviously, the CHP representative defended shrinking of the political space through the pretext of Constitutional constraints. Having been defeated in all the elections that the AKP has joined, the CHP representative indirectly acknowledged that they had no confidence in winning against the AKP through electoral mechanisms.

Erdoğan has defended his party over the main concept of democracy; the popular will, and argued that “it is not a move against the AKP; it is a move against the national will...No one can disregard the national will. Those who make us go through this nonsensical closure case will go through shame themselves. There are no legal grounds for this. Turkey will keep going forward in expanding the sphere of basic rights and freedoms.”<sup>493</sup> He was aware of the fact that his Party had the moral high grounds and used it against the establishment.

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<sup>491</sup> Corpus Quran, Surah Al Imran Verse 28, available here: <http://corpus.quran.com/translation.jsp?chapter=3&verse=28>, last accessed on 23.08.2020.

<sup>492</sup> DeutscheWelle, *AKP’ye Kapatma Davası Açıldı*, (Closure Case was Opened against AKP), 2008, DeutscheWelle, available here: <https://www.dw.com/tr/akpye-kapatma-davas%C4%B1-a%C3%A7%C4%B1d%C4%B1/a-3192923>, last accessed on 27.06.2020.

<sup>493</sup> Bianet, *Kapatma Davasına Halk Tepki Verir*, *AKP Yüzde 70 Oy Alır* (People Would React Negatively to Closure Case and AKP Would Get 70 Percent), 2008, Bianet, <http://m.bianet.org/bianet/siyaset/105629-kapatma-davasina-halk-tepki-verir-akp-yuzde-70-oy-alir>, last accessed on 27.06.2020.

Expanding public sphere obviously referred to de-securitization, that is to say, democratization, which had huge support among conservative audience, Erdoğan's actual and potential base. It is noteworthy that, despite the discursive advantage, Erdoğan did not escalate the tension in the process of the closure case.

After 4 months, in July 2008, the closure case ended with 6 of 11 judges of the Constitutional Court deciding in favour of the AKP. The rapporteur of the case had reported to the judges of the Court that utmost care must be exhibited regarding the political rights of the parties, resembling it to individual rights. Referring to ECHR decisions on closure cases, the rapporteur underlined that the parties that were elected in by the people must be elected out by them.<sup>494</sup> The Chief Justice of the Court declared that the Court did not reach the required majority to close the Party, yet it issued a serious warning for the Party for being the focal point of anti-secular activities and halved the grant that it received from the treasury.<sup>495</sup>

However, as it was expressed by Venice Commission, an advisory body to Council of Europe on Constitutional issues, Turkey has the politico-legal practice of dissolving political parties, significantly more than European states. The Constitutional Court, since its inception in 1961, has dissolved 24 political parties other than the ones closed down by the military coups. Most of these parties were either socialist parties, which were often times established in a pro-Kurdish framework or the parties of NOM tradition. They were portrayed as threats to the indivisible territorial and national integrity of the state<sup>496</sup> by the Court in closure cases. For the purposes of this study, this habitus of the Constitutional Court has made the institution function as a repressive state apparatus, which in practice has performed as a major means of securitization depriving people off political representation.

All in all, the decision of the Constitutional Court against the closure of the AKP signified a historic moment for the Party. Once considered that the same Court has closed many of the Islamist parties down in the past, it became clear that the AKP had differentiated itself from the Islamist parties. The Court has tried the AKP with very similar accusations and acquitted it with an insignificant fine. In its initial years, the Party was trying to overcome its

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<sup>494</sup>Hürriyet, *Raportör 'Kapatılmasın' Dedi*, (Rapporteur Rejects the Closure), Hürriyet, 2008, available here: <https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/raportor-kapatilmasin-dedi-9452792>, last accessed on 27.06.2020.

<sup>495</sup>Milliyet, *'AK Parti Kapatılmasın' Kararı Çıktı*, (The Verdict did not Close the AKP), Milliyet, 2008, available here: <https://www.milliyet.com.tr/siyaset/ak-parti-kapatilmasin-karari-cikti-972729>, last accessed on 27.06.2020.

<sup>496</sup> See page 20 of the opinion of Venice Commission on the Prohibition of Political Parties in Turkey here: [https://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/?pdf=CDL-AD\(2009\)006-e](https://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/?pdf=CDL-AD(2009)006-e), last accessed on 23.07.2020.

deeply founded insecurity towards the wrath of the secularist establishment with a pro-democracy language that acted as a defensive shield.<sup>497</sup>

The decision of the Court has created a sense of security among the AKP elite that the second most important source of threat to its rule acted in an inconsequential manner. In 2007, the TAF as the primary and most formidable threat acted in vain to corner the Party and in 2008 high judiciary, as the second *clear and present danger* bore no fruit in its efforts to close the Party. In the presence of ineffective opposition, this opened a vast space of authority field for the AKP to exercise its power. In other words, after being acquitted in the closure case, the Party would become the single most important powerhouse in the country. In practical terms, having defanged the bureaucratic establishment, the AKP had no systemic hindrance to prevent its medium and long term agenda. It had no imperatives of survival ahead and therefore, the policies that it followed afterwards would reveal its true political agenda. It could revitalize the EU access reforms that stagnated in 2006 easily, that is to say, if the Party chose to do so. The policies of the Party however, in the following years, would prove otherwise, especially after the AKP established its electoral domination after 2011 elections.

### **2.2.1.3 The Sledgehammer Case: *Broadening the Disarticulation***

The closure case instilled two opposing senses in AKP leadership. On the one side, it had become clear that the establishment did not have the necessary power accumulation at high judiciary to disqualify the AKP from political space. On the other side, there was no guarantee that it would not intervene again when it deems the conditions as ripe. Therefore, the AKP leadership considered it possible and necessary to broaden its onslaught to disarticulate the secularist establishment. It was consistent with AKP's overall discourse that emphasized popular will as the source of legitimacy, which stipulated fighting against bureaucratic tutelage. It also increased the electoral support of the Party in 2007 and 2011 general elections.

In such a milieu, the liberal Taraf daily published alleged coup plans called *Balyoz* that dated back to 2003 in January 2010. With a short-lived (5 years) brave journalism, Taraf daily has set the agenda frequently in Turkish politics. "The daily published a series of highly controversial stories that revealed the involvement of the Turkish military in daily political affairs. The revealed documents, such as coup plans that involved the bombing of historical

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<sup>497</sup>Yavuz Hakan M. (2009), *ibid.*, p. 114.



mosques in Turkey, paved the road to the “*Balyoz*” (Sledgehammer) case...”<sup>498</sup> Unearthing many shady acts by the power holders, the Daily was sued multiple times by Erdoğan, AKP government, MGK and National Intelligence Organization (MİT). Upon Taraf’s publication on coup plans, the office of chief public prosecutor in Istanbul, then, prepared an indictment accusing 236 Army officers, 188 of whom were generals and staff officers for planning a coup attempt in 2003. As of 2010, there was a broad public conviction that Gülenists and the AKP had allied against the establishment and both *Ergenekon* and *Balyoz* were their joint attempts to disarticulate it with the belief that the age of military interventions was (or rather should be) over. “In return for its support, Erdoğan had allowed the (Gülen) movement to establish a substantial presence in the police and the judiciary, which was then used to target their shared enemies, opponents and rivals...”<sup>499</sup>

Just like *Ergenekon* trials, the *Balyoz* case rapidly became a matter of social and political polarization. The liberals that were few in number yet effective in intelligentsia, supporters of the AKP and the Gülenists hailed the case as the initial steps of a tutelage-free era. The supporters of the case disregarded or overlooked the violations of legal rights during the prosecution and welcomed the symbolic value it bore in terms of subordinating the military to law. Despite the overreach and exaggeration of the prosecutors the case represented a milestone in Turkish politics that opened a new era signified by legal accountability of high judicio-military bureaucracy, in other words, the secularist establishment.<sup>500</sup> It is noteworthy that the establishment had lost the support of the segments of society that were secular in lifestyle yet demanded further democratization; and this was at odds with the worldview of the establishment. The opponents of the case, however, were convinced that the legitimacy of the case was very weak because of the violations of rights of defendants and the questionable quality of evidence. For the opponents, politically charged motivations of the prosecutors and systematic lynch campaigns of media were other reasons for the case to be less-than-legitimate.

Both the pro-AKP and Gülenist media used the language of the prosecution in *Ergenekon* and *Balyoz* cases. Zaman daily, the major Gülenist media organ hailed the verdict

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<sup>498</sup>Hürriyet Daily News, *Taraf Editor-in-Chief, Other Staff Leave Posts*, Hürriyet Daily News, 2012, available here: <https://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/taaraf-editor-in-chief-other-staff-leave-posts-36910>, last accessed on 23.08.2020.

<sup>499</sup>Jenkins Gareth, “The Balyoz Retrial and the Changing Politics of Turkish Justice”, *The Turkey Analyst*, vol. 7, no. 12, 2014.

<sup>500</sup>Birand Mehmet Ali, *Balyoz Davası, Yeni Bir Dönemin Başlangıcıdır*, (The Balyoz Case is the Beginning of a New Era), Hürriyet, 2010, available here: <https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/balyoz-davasi-yeni-bir-donemin-baslangicidir-16555171>, last accessed on 29.06.2020.



of the *Ergenekon* trials for example as “Lifetime Jail for Ergenekon Terrorist Organisation” and all media organs under the control of the AKP government congratulated the verdict and defined the alleged *Ergenekon* network as “coup-plotters” and “junta”.<sup>501</sup> The clear public support of the Gülenists was the major reason for the public perception that they acted in tandem with the AKP in these cases in a rather symbiotic way. Resembling the *Ergenekon* trials, the Sledgehammer case was also marred with long detention durations without indictment. All in all, for the opponents of the case, “it is impossible to square the systematic violation of due process and of evidentiary standards observed in these trials with the rule of law. These flaws have been obscured by the fact that some of the defendants hold ultra-nationalist views or are widely suspected of complicity in the illicit activities of Turkey’s infamous ‘deep state’.”<sup>502</sup> In other words the popular legitimacy of the cases primarily came from the questionable profile of the defendants rather than the lawful prosecution of the cases. Yet, in the final analysis, the AKP had the upper hand against the establishment because of the public support they enjoyed, EU’s appreciation for the disarticulation of bureaucratic tutelage as they saw it as a major hindrance for democratic reforms, and the discursive advantage that is obtained from overall process of democratization.

After two years the case resulted with severe punishments for those who were allegedly involved in coup preparations in 2003. 330 defendants, including the commanders of Land Forces, Naval Forces and the First Army were sentenced between 16 and 20 years. The verdict was celebrated by the proponents of the case as a decisive attack on the tutelary system. Patronage of TAF over civilian politics had limited basic freedoms, deteriorated politics, and exacerbated the public space for Kurds and conservatives for far too long, and therefore, it was near impossible for the TAF to get their support. The decisive blow on the tutelary system was executed by Erdoğan leadership with the help of Gülenists and international society.<sup>503</sup> For the symbiosis of the AKP and GM, the case represented an amalgamation of democratic principles and power and interests. For the time being, it was extremely difficult to get behind the discursive shield of the “duo” and therefore, it remained a complete enigma whether the principled attitude was the driving engine of the case. In a few years, however, the AKP would ally with the very people that it targeted through these cases

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<sup>501</sup>Diken, *Mahcup Manşetler*, (Shameful Headlines), Diken, 2014, available here: <http://www.diken.com.tr/mahcup-mansetler/>, last accessed on 29.06.2020.

<sup>502</sup>Rodrik Dani, “Ergenekon and Sledgehammer: Building or Undermining the Rule of Law?”, *Turkish Policy Quarterly*, vol. 10, no. 1, 2011, p. 99-109.

<sup>503</sup>Birand Mehmet Ali, *Balyoz'da Kantarın Topuzu Kaçtı*, (The Boundaries Overstepped in Balyoz Case), Milliyet, 2012, available here: <https://www.milliyet.com.tr/yazarlar/mehmet-ali-birand/balyozda-kantarın-topuzu-kacti-1601545>, last accessed on 29.06.2020.

and frame them as Gülenist conspiracies. Thus, it would be extremely difficult to assume that the AKP executed the *Ergenekon* and *Balyoz* trials out of its adherence in democratic principles. It would, then, be far to argue that it was a power game played in the language of democratization for the Party.

### **2.2.2. Kurdish Opening: *An Opaque and Inconclusive Act of De-securitization***

Since the beginning of the Republican rule, Kurds, as the largest non-Turkish group were denied full representation and their ethno-cultural demands were securitized with the claim that they posed a threat to national unity and survival. Having been given deaf ear, the Kurds revolted multiple times in the first two decades of the Republic, yet they were all suppressed by the recently consolidated central government. As expressed in the first Part of this dissertation, the public space of the Republic was designed through a *double front exclusion mechanism* which discriminated against Kurds and conservative Muslims alongside religious minorities.

Although Article 66 of Turkish Constitution enclaves Turkish identity as; “Anyone who is tied to Turkish state through a civic connection is a Turk”<sup>504</sup>. Turkishness in the public space has always been defined by ethno-cultural elements to a serious extent. This rather political definition of Turkishness was constituted ethnically by Turkishness, religiously by Islam (*sunni*) and in terms of lifestyle, secularism. Through a cultural monism, as was detailed at the beginning of the thesis, the Republic frowned upon expression of other elements of identities in the public space. As most other ethnic identities were not autochthonous and rendered small portions of population, they did not bear a challenge for the centralist-monist identity policies of the Republic. By the end of Cold War, a new political wave started articulating sub-national identities which concurred with the process of democratization, and the demands of Kurds, as the largest non-Turkish ethnicity in Turkey, started becoming more vocal. As minorities are practically framed via religious identity in Turkey, the Kurds, majority of who are Muslims, have not demanded to obtain a minority status. While there has never been a univocal representation on behalf of Kurds, their demands formed around regional autonomy and the recognition of their cultural and linguistic rights.<sup>505</sup>

With the launch of armed rebellion by pro-Kurdish terror group, Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) in 1984, the Kurdish demands started to be framed as a threat to national security

<sup>504</sup> The full text of Article 66 is available here: [https://www.tbmm.gov.tr/develop/owa/tc\\_anayasasi.maddeler?p3=66](https://www.tbmm.gov.tr/develop/owa/tc_anayasasi.maddeler?p3=66), last accessed on 25.07.2020.

<sup>505</sup> Akgönül Samim (2011), *ibid.*, p. 143.

by the Republic. In a short while, the Kurdish issue has been elevated to the status of existential threat in Turkey's politico-military agenda. "For the Turkish State, the Kurdish question has historically been framed (and contained) within a State security paradigm. The dominant reading by State actors has been that state repressive measures were a legitimate response to PKK "terrorism," with little attempt to understand its root causes."<sup>506</sup> Presence of such an existential threat helped TAF and other security forces maintain prominence and exercise political influence. In other words, this security oriented approach to solve or at least contain the Kurdish issue has been in line with the interests of secularist establishment at the core of which lay the TAF.

Therefore, for the AKP to solve the Kurdish issue there were multiple benefits: It could secure the votes of moderate Kurds, consolidate its electoral base at the centre-right, and downgrade the political prominence of TAF. In other words, any significant improvement in the Kurdish issue not only would establish electoral security for the AKP but also facilitate the disarticulation of secularist establishment ripping it off its major justification for tutelage over civilian politics. In such favourable conditions, President Abdullah Gül, stated in early 2009 that "Beautiful things will happen in Kurdish issue...Comprehensive talks are being carried out behind closed doors...It is time to seek political solutions to the Issue."<sup>507</sup> A couple months later Erdoğan declared the commencement of a work on such a solution and, as it was leaked in 2011<sup>508</sup>, secret talks between the PKK representatives and officials of Turkish Intelligence, MİT started in 2009 in Oslo. Accordingly, the PKK extended the previously declared and ended ceasefire as a sign of goodwill and faith in the process. Yet, pro-Kurdish DTP was shut down in the same year by the Constitutional Court and the Kurdish process was hindered. The main opposition CHP and smaller MHP staunchly opposed the process and defining it as a trap, they claimed that state authorities can not have secret talks with terrorists.<sup>509</sup>

While the government was trying to move forward in its Kurdish initiative despite the resistance of secularist establishment and the political opposition, the Gülenists started their

<sup>506</sup> Cavanaugh Kathleen, Huhges Edel, "A Democratic Opening? The AKP and the Kurdish Left", *Muslim World Journal of Human Rights*, 2015, vol. 12, no. 1, p. 15.

<sup>507</sup> T24, Gül: Kürt Sorununda İyi İşeyler Olacak, (Good Things Will Happen in Kurdish Issue), available here: <https://t24.com.tr/haber/gul-kurt-sorununda-iyi-seyler-olacak,33742>, T24, 2009, last accessed on 26.07.2020.

<sup>508</sup> NTV, MİT-PKK Görüşmeleri Sızdı, (Secret Talks Between PKK and MİT Leaks), NTV, 2009, available here: <https://www.ntv.com.tr/turkiye/mit-pkk-gorusmeleri-sizdi,a87SUp4ta0akgKlpk5-w>, last accessed on 26.07.2020.

<sup>509</sup> CNNTürk, Başlangıçtan Bugüne Gün Gün Çözüm Süreci, (Day by Day Solution Process From Its Inception), CNNTürk.com, 2011, available here: <https://www.cnnturk.com/fotogaleri/turkiye/baslangictan-bugune-gun-gun-cozum-sureci?page=20>, last accessed on 26.07.2020.

own initiative in a rather autonomous manner. Taking a hawkish and nationalist stance against the Kurdish opening, the Gülenists manifested their position in two ways; first, the mass prosecution of PKK-connected Union of Kurdistan Communities (KCK) and attempting to interrogate the MİT undersecretary, Hakan Fidan, for his role in secret talks of Oslo. On the Kurdish issue, Fethullah Gülen said: “We envisaged a solution process before the AKP... I promoted education of the mother tongue... I am not opposed to having talks with the PKK but it must be in line with the dignity of the state... The PKK didn't want our activities to prevent young people joining the militants in the mountains.”<sup>510</sup> Gülen's mild revisionism seems to have materialized in late 1990s, that is to say, his discourse on religious diversity shifted in favor of a more accommodating stance to the point of meeting Pope Jean Paul II in the context of inter-religious dialogue.<sup>511</sup> However, he has disregarded the collective demands of Kurds on identity and self-rule, and saw the issue as a matter of development through the lens of territorial integrity of Turkey.<sup>512</sup> Having established a private television channel in Kurdish, Dünya TV, Gülenists had an agenda of opening towards Kurds as well, albeit different from that of the AKP.<sup>513</sup> All in all, the Gülen Movement had a mind of its own on Kurdish opening that could be framed as a “third way” between the AKP's opening and secularist establishment's traditional security oriented stance.

Gülen's discourse can be framed as *incorporationist* bordering assimilationism on the Kurdish issue. He carries elements of security-oriented traditional official discourse of the Republic and Kurdish Opening crafted by the AKP. “I wish we were able to send teachers who would be committed to live and die there and preachers who know the character of local people there. I wish we could send law enforcement there who would knock on the doors and learn the problems that people have. Then those who deceive the people of the region would not be able to penetrate to the society there.”<sup>514</sup> The red line for the Gülen and his followers was

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<sup>510</sup> Yıldız Güney, *Fethullah Gülen BBC'ye Konuştu*, (Fethullah Gülen Speaks to BBC), BBC, 2014, available here: [https://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler/2014/01/140126\\_fethullah\\_gulen\\_roportaj\\_guney](https://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler/2014/01/140126_fethullah_gulen_roportaj_guney), last accessed on 27.07.2020.

<sup>511</sup> Akgönül Samim, “Les activités du Patriarcat « œcuménique » de Phanar dans les années 1990 et l'opinion publique turque”, *Cahiers d'études sur la Méditerranée Orientale et le Monde Turco-Iranien*, 2002, vol. 33, p.195-216.

<sup>512</sup> Çalışlar Oral, *Fethullah Hoca'dan Öcalan Değerlendirmeleri*, (Fethullah Gülen Evaluates Öcalan), Radikal, 2014, available here: <http://www.radikal.com.tr/yazarlar/oral-calislari/fethullah-hocadan-ocalan-degerlendirmeleri-1173450/>, last accessed on 27.07.2020.

<sup>513</sup> Turgut Serdar, *Cemaatin Kürt Açılımı*, (Gülenists' Kurdish Opening), 2010, HaberTürk, available here: <https://www.haberturk.com/yazarlar/serdar-turgut-2025/525314-cemaatin-kurt-acilimi>, last accessed on 27.07.2020.

<sup>514</sup> Sol, *Gülen'in İrkçi Sözleri Hâlâ Hafızalarda!* (Gülen's Racist Claims are Still Remembered!), Sol, 2011, available here: <https://haber.sol.org.tr/devlet-ve-siyaset/gulenin-irkci-sozleri-hala-hafizalarda-haberi-47719>, last accessed on 25.08.2020.

the “transgression of dignity of the state”, which for them, was committed by the AKP government.

A major hindrance to the Kurdish opening was the KCK prosecutions. Being defined as a secessionist terrorist group in organic connection to PKK by the Supreme Court of Appeals<sup>515</sup>, the KCK was believed to be the secret urban organization of PKK. HatipDicle, the chairman of pro-Kurdish Democracy Party (DEP) which was shut down by the Constitutional Court in 1994, claimed that AKP and Gülenists acted in tandem in KCK prosecutions, and as they started parting ways, the AKP put the blame on the Gülenists. Accordingly, the Gülenist elements in law enforcement planned and executed the prosecutions under the AKP government’s consent. Dicle also argued that Erdoğan did not have an actual vision or roadmap for the solution of the Kurdish issue.<sup>516</sup> KCK’s leader, Murat Karayılan, in an interview, asserted that it was the Gülenists who designed and executed the KCK prosecutions and got them accepted by the government. Karayılan also said that the AKP and the Gülenists started having conflict of interest, the Gülenists leaked the Oslo talks (in 2011), to put the government under a difficult position.<sup>517</sup>

In an overall analysis, the Kurdish opening, as an initiative of AKP, has quickly turned into a battleground that involved 6 major actors: *AKP, pro-Kurdish Peace and Democracy Party (BDP), PKK, political opposition (especially MHP and CHP), secularist establishment and the Gülen Movement*. As the AKP was not strong enough to move forward with its agenda, the combined effect of CHP and MHP was not strong enough to prevent the process despite the rising Turkish nationalism in Turkey. BDP did not have a determinant power on the issue but it gained a political momentum utilizing the process, that is to say, the expansion of the political space brought pro-Kurdish legitimate politics in an advantageous position regarding the pressure that they got from the PKK. In other words, AKP’s efforts on de-securitization of the Kurdish issue served the pro-Kurdish politics well who would soon pass the 10% election threshold for the first time in the electoral history of Turkey in 2015. The secularist establishment tried to maintain the traditional securitization approach of Turkish

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<sup>515</sup> AA, *Yargıtay’dan Terör Örgütü 'KCK' Tespitleri*, (Supreme Court of Appeals Identifies KCK as a Terror Organization), AA, 2019, available here: <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/turkiye/yargitaydan-teror-orgutu-kck-tespitleri/1593616>, last accessed on 27.07.2020.

<sup>516</sup> T24, *Hatip Dicle: Süreci Tıkayan MİT değil, Erdoğan*, (HatipDicle: It is not MİT that Undermined the Process but Erdoğan), T24, 2014, available here: <https://t24.com.tr/haber/hatip-dicle-sureci-tikayan-mit-degil-erdogan.259011>, last accessed on 27.07.2020.

<sup>517</sup> Sol, *Karayılan: KCK Operasyonları Cemaat Projesi*, (Karayılan Claims KCK Operations Run by the Gülenists), Sol, 2012, available here: <https://haber.sol.org.tr/devlet-ve-siyaset/karayilan-kck-operasyonlari-cemaat-projesi-haberi-52405>, last accessed on 27.07.2020.

Republic, yet their reputation was tarnished with the ineffectiveness of their approach for almost 30 years against the PKK violence. The Gülen Movement's "third way" and the cleavage it had with the AKP due to lack of mutual trust and AKP's allegedly excessive compromise during the process effectively halted the Kurdish opening, that is until it would be re-opened by the AKP in 2012, again to no avail. In the conceptualization of this study, AKP's attempt of de-securitization was prevented by the secularist establishment's traditional securitization approach (Constitutional Court's closure of pro-Kurdish DTP) and Gülen Movement's mild and integrationist de-securitization which was executed autonomously and in different direction from the AKP.

### **2.2.3. The 2010 Constitutional Referendum: A Systemic Takeover**

Having changed the structure of MGK in 2003 and defeating the onslaught of TAF that came through an e-memorandum in 2007, and winning the 2007 elections with a significant increase, the AKP had almost neutralized the primary institution of securitization, which has acted as the only rival powerhouse in the country. However, the high judiciary's attempt to close the Party in 2008, indicated that the tutelary establishment was still active and in full motivation. Therefore, it had to be neutralized to expand the space for civilian politics as well. Since the organs of high judiciary, especially Supreme Court of Appeals (*Yargıtay*) and Constitutional Court (*Anayasa Mahkemesi*, AYM) were major constitutional institutions, and they were controlled by the establishment, AKP needed all the legitimacy it could muster to make changes on them. Therefore, in 2010, they called for a referendum which actually aimed at much more than neutralization of these institutions.

As a procedure, the referendum is an act of de-securitization in itself since it allows the Constitution to be discussed by the society. In the 2010 Referendum, the tutelary nature of the constitutional institutions and the authoritarian policies that they had been following started to be debated in the context of legitimacy.<sup>518</sup> It brought 26 amendments before the public among which were; bringing the plotters of 1980 coup to justice who were protected by a temporary Constitutional article, affirmative action for women, protection of privacy, right to bargain collectively and strike for public servants, right to appeal High Military Council (*Yüksek Askeri Şura*, YAŞ) decisions, which designates promotions of high ranking military officers, at a civilian court, and an ombudsmanship to deal with administrative complains

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<sup>518</sup>Yenişafak, *12 Eylül'e Yargı Yolu: 2010 Anayasa Referandumu* (Coup Plotters of September 12 to be Tried: 2010 Constitutional Referendum), Yenişafak, available here: <https://www.yenisafak.com/secim-referandum-2010>, last accessed on 02.07.2020.



from bureaucracy. The most important amendments however, were envisaged on the structures of Constitutional Court (AYM) and High Council of Judges and Prosecutors (*Hakimler ve Savcılar Yüksek Kurulu*, HSYK). The number of members of AYM was to be increased from 11 to 17. In the previous case 6 out of 11 members were elected by high judiciary from among them giving them simple majority. In the amended version, 10 out of 17 of them were to be elected by a dominant government in the Parliament and the President, which practically meant by the AKP. In its unchanged structure, HSYK had 7 members, 5 out of whom were selected by high judiciary from among them representing a qualified majority. The amendment envisaged increasing the number of members to 17, 12 of which were to be selected by a dominant government party, that is to say, the AKP.<sup>519</sup>

Two major functions of AYM; auditing the political parties and closing them down once deemed necessary, and compliance audit of the legislation render it a major watchdog of the regime. Therefore, taking over the control of this Constitutional institution, that is to say; staffing it with enough number of loyal judges, means taking over a prominent bastion of the establishment for the AKP. As for HSYK, since it is in charge of assignment and dismissal of judges and prosecutors, it hangs over every critical court decision like the sword of Damocles as a means of immediate control. With the proposed amendments, the AKP opted for going beyond neutralization of these institutions and paving the way for a “party-dominated-system”. With the amendments, any government party that is strong enough to have the qualified majority in the Parliament would be able to dominate the whole state system and all the executive, legislative and judiciary branches, and undermine the separation of powers. The infamous 10% election threshold enables the major parties to have number of seats in the Parliament far beyond their representative proportion. The AKP had obtained 66% of the seats in the Parliament with only 34% of the votes when it came to power for the first time in 2002. Therefore a single party government or coalition bloc could dominate the Parliament and the whole system consecutively. In the conditions of 2010, the only party that fit these conditions was the AKP, therefore, it would be fair to claim that the 2010 referendum aimed at *creating a civilian dominated regime that paved the way for undermining the separation of powers through staffing of the Constitutional institutions*. The referendum, then, can be regarded as a major systemic step for the authoritarian turn the AKP went through in post-2011 period.

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<sup>519</sup>NTV, *Referandumda Neyi Oylayacağız?* (What Will We Vote in the Referendum?), 2010, NTV, available here: [https://www.ntv.com.tr/turkiye/referandumda-neyi-oylayacagiz.Y3\\_mXUnr4EKd4PzWex4cvw](https://www.ntv.com.tr/turkiye/referandumda-neyi-oylayacagiz.Y3_mXUnr4EKd4PzWex4cvw), last accessed on 03.07.2020.

While the AKP government and its then-symbiote; such as Gülenists and then-supporters such as liberals defended that the referendum with the justification that it aimed at removing the secularist tutelage and building an independent judiciary, which would at once disarticulate the establishment, the opposition was concerned about a new and “civilian tutelage over judiciary” that potentially undermines separation of powers in favor of the government. Giving examples from European countries where the Parliaments and elected officials appoint members of high judiciary<sup>520</sup>, the AKP argued that it would only reflect the popular will and therefore, be democratic if the members are elected by the Parliament and government. It also claimed that there was a closed circuit system, a “caste system”, in the Turkish high judiciary where the HSYK members were elected by high judiciary, more specifically by State Council (Danıştay) and Yargıtay, and HSYK ironically nominated the people to be elected to Yargıtay and Danıştay<sup>521</sup>.

Despite the fact that these are fair criticisms of the tutelary bureaucracy of the secularist establishment, the AKP did not disclose any possible exploitation of the new judiciary by the executive, that is, by itself. It “considered the secular judges in the high courts and “oppressive ideas” of the secular elite as the major obstacles to “democratic consolidation” in the country... Therefore, the 2010 Constitutional Referendum was introduced by the executive as the removal of the judicial guardianship of state elites’ interests by democratic pressures from below.”<sup>522</sup> Independent and impartial judiciary, rule of law and individual application to AYM created the core of AKP’s campaign.<sup>523</sup>

The independent and impartial judiciary, however, existed only in the discursive space as the AKP –in practice- replaced the bureaucratic tutelage with an executive one. Essentially, the changes in the AYM and HSYK rendered as a *replacement of one mode of securitization with another*. The concept of people’s will, which was an easy sell in popular terms, was used to legitimize the governmental control over the judiciary. The Party has utilized an *anti-elite exclusion* in its discourse and successfully framed the issue as “people vs. elite” contradiction in which the AKP represented the former. The past performance of high judiciary in terms of

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<sup>520</sup> Ak Parti Tanıtım ve Medya Başkanlığı, *Anayasa Değişiklik Paketiyle İlgili Sorular ve Cevaplar*, (Questions and Answers About the Constitutional Amendments), 2010, Ak Parti, p. 50-51.

<sup>521</sup> Ak Parti, *ibid.*, p.59.

<sup>522</sup> Köse Mehmet, “The Evolution of the Separation of Powers in the Turkish Republic: The Case of 2010 Constitutional Referendum”, a master’s thesis submitted to Boğaziçi University, 2014, p. 126. Available at YÖK’s website: <https://tez.yok.gov.tr/UlusalTezMerkezi/tezSorguSonucYeni.jsp>

<sup>523</sup> Ak Parti, *2010 Anayasa Referandumunu*, (2010 Constitutional Referendum), Ak Parti, 2010, available here: <https://www.akparti.org.tr/galeriler/foto-galeriler/2010-anayasa-referandumu-01-agustos/#videoGallery-1>, last accessed on 03.07.2020.



party closures and exercise of restrictions on religious behaviour had distanced the conservative masses from them. AKP's referendum campaign increased this distance with its anti-elite exclusion and the Party eventually passed the referendum without much difficulty.

At the backdrop of AKP's discourse that emphasized removing the judicial tutelage, the main opposition, CHP drew the attention to two major issues; the amendments on Yargıtay and AYM, and argued that the whole referendum package was put together to hide proposed changes in these institutions. The strategic aim of the AKP leadership, according to CHP, was to staff these institutions with people close to them and secure them because they were involved in criminal affairs. Going further, CHP defined the proposed change on high judiciary as "AKP's coup d'état". The main opposition claimed that the AKP was hypocritical in its call for democratization because it did not abolish YÖK and remove the 10% election threshold<sup>524</sup>. CHP's claims bear significant virtue once the YÖK and the practice of election threshold are institutionalized practices of securitization: While YÖK exercises a heavy control over universities; the election threshold is devised to keep the pro-Kurdish political parties or the ones that are framed as "marginal" out of Parliament and deny them full representation in the political space.

#### **2.2.4. A Symbiosis of Power: *AKP and the Gülenists***

A key development in the referendum process was surfacing and publicizing of the symbiotic relationship between the Gülenists and AKP. Until 2010 referendum, the Gülen Movement (GM) that is elaborated below, denied any political affiliation with the AKP, yet during the referendum process, the Movement became very vocal for the referendum to pass. For the first time in his life Fethullah Gülen, the founding leader of the Movement, publicly exhibited his orientation in a polarizing political matter. Claiming that the change was actually far less than it must have been for the purposes of democratization, Gülen underlined the importance of democracy, especially in the process of EU access and Turkey's expansion of spheres of influence in the Middle East. Portraying the changes in high judiciary as removal of judicial tutelage, he claimed to maintain a neutral position in referendum's effect on AKP's popularity and described his support as "supra-political" in the partisan sense. He

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<sup>524</sup>CHP, *Neden Hayır?*, (Why No?), CHP, 2010, available here: [https://ozanguven.com.tr/blog/photo/2010/08/CHP-NEDEN\\_HAYIR\\_KITAPCIK\\_web.pdf](https://ozanguven.com.tr/blog/photo/2010/08/CHP-NEDEN_HAYIR_KITAPCIK_web.pdf), last accessed on 03.07.2020.

also explained his support in a pragmatic way that despite supporting the AKP-led referendum, Gülen asserted that the Movement maintains equidistant to all political parties.<sup>525</sup>

Upon the referendum results, in his weekly broadcast address to his followers, Gülen reiterated that he supported the referendum with the belief that it would pave the way for greatness and freedom for Turkey. To underline, once again, his non-partisan view, he said he would support transition into democracy in 1946 which happened by the hands of the then leader of CHP for whom conservatives have negative views, including his followers.<sup>526</sup> Obviously Gülen was trying to maintain a discursive advantage saying his support for the referendum was supra-political. However, as the Constitution sets the basic functioning of state apparatuses and defines the rules and boundaries of exercise of power, it is not possible to frame a Constitutional amendment supra-political. Perhaps, Gülen framed it in such a way out of two basic concerns: first, he did not want to frame himself as a dedicated supporter of the AKP in the eyes of his followers and broader society. The second, he wanted to protect the established discourse of his Movement as “non-political”. However, Gülen and his movement had a political vision which coincided with the AKP in terms of common threat perception of secularist establishment. Involvement of pro-Gülen judiciary in *Ergenekon* and *Balyoz* cases and the clear support of the Movement for the Referendum through its media organs endorse this argument explicitly.

In his victory speech Erdoğan expressed a specific gratitude to Gülenists for their contribution to the process. Referring to Gülen for his American residence as “the one beyond the ocean” he reaffirmed his appreciation a second time in the same speech.<sup>527</sup> Soon after the referendum, Erdoğan invited Gülen, who left Turkey due to a risk of arrest in 1999, when the 1997 coup that oppressed the conservatives was still in effect, back to Turkey in a rather emphatic way: “The longing that (Gülen is suffering) should end, we want to see him in Turkey”<sup>528</sup> All in all, the perception of alliance was created by both sides among the public during and after the 2010 referendum. Yet, a couple months after this speech, the two entities would turn into existential enemies and shape the coming decade of Turkey.

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<sup>525</sup> Gülen'den Referandum Yorumu Evet Desteği, (Gülen's Take on Referendum and His Support for It), 2010, available here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T60YomY-jEA>, last accessed on 03.07.2020.

<sup>526</sup> HerkulNağme, Referandum Sonrası ve Emniyette Kadrolaşma, YouTube, 2010, available here: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AOW3XaNyV\\_c](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AOW3XaNyV_c), 06.07.2020.

<sup>527</sup> SendikaOrg, Erdoğan: Okyanus Ötesine Teşekkürler, (Erdoğan Thanks the One Beyond the Ocean), Youtube, 2010, available here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QxlrftOyFn0>, last accessed on 04.07.2020.

<sup>528</sup> Youtube, Erdoğan Gülen'i Türkiye'ye Davet Etti! (Erdoğan Invited Gülen Back to Turkey), 2013, available here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=blFhCzAuM2M>, last accessed on 04.07.2020.

Since the AKP's relations with GM, first as a symbiotic partner and then a clear object of antagonism shaped Turkish politics in 2010s the Movement deserves elaboration in this part of the analysis. The Movement, as its name suggests, was established by Fethullah Gülen, a pious and charismatic figure in early 1970s as a moderate Islamic movement in Western Turkey. The basic ideas of Gülen Movement are based on the writings of Said Nursi, a prominent Turkish Islamic scholar of Kurdish origin and Fethullah Gülen identifies him as "the great mind-maker of the century"<sup>529</sup>. Gülen, however, expanded on the traditional teachings of Nursi and evolved them into a broader discourse that "preaches an inclusive brand of Sunni Islam that emphasizes cooperation and tolerance, views modernity as broadly compatible with Islam, and, above all, stresses the importance of education outside of narrow religious schools. More than anything, the Gülen Movement (which is also known in Turkey as *Hizmet*, meaning "the service") is known for its schools."<sup>530</sup> The Movement defines itself as "Religiously inspired social movement which works around education, dialogue and charity activities... it refers to the idea of serving humanity through civil, social projects as part of one's religious responsibilities."<sup>531</sup> In this definition, the role of faith and the religious behaviour seems to be underrated, perhaps, to be appealing to a variety of audiences from different faith traditions in their social work. Creating legitimacy in the eyes of secular people and institutions and those of other faith traditions also play role in downplaying the religious identity and motivation.

Furthermore, it fits the mundane mission of the Movement that is built around peaceful co-existence of diverse people in the same society. Yet, the Movement's mission is not limited to its mundane activities; the organizing principle for the participants of the Movement is promoting the content of Islamic faith without any emphasis on religious identity. In other words, they aspire after developing the characteristics of ideal Muslim of Sufi tradition which, by nature, imply downplaying the self and the identity of the self. "The followers of Gülen believe that they have a mission not necessarily to convert... but at least to convey to others that what they believe is the true enlightened face of Islam."<sup>532</sup> Yet, the Movement maintains a different conception of Sufi tradition in which salvation is attained

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<sup>529</sup>Gülen Fethullah, *EğitimTarihimizde Medreseler*, (Madrasas in Our History of Education), fgulen.com, 2020, available here: <http://fgulen.com/tr/eserleri/bahar-nesidesi/egitim-tarihimizde-medreseler>, last accessed on 27.08.2020.

<sup>530</sup>Matthews Dylan, *Turkey's coup: The Gülen Movement, Explained*, Vox, 2016, available here: <https://www.vox.com/2016/7/16/12204456/gulen-movement-explained>, last accessed on 04.07.2020.

<sup>531</sup>Sezgin İsmail M., *What is the Hizmet Movement?*, Center for Hizmet Studies, YouTube, 2015, available here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5wH0vLpxqC4>, last accessed on 04.07.2020.

<sup>532</sup>Yavuz Hakan M., *Towards an Islamic Enlightenment: The Gülen Movement*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2013, p. 71.

through engaging in social and economic activities rather than reclusive contemplation. In this regard, it presents an important example on putting religious ideas into practice and creating social and economic activity out of these ideas.<sup>533</sup>The most prominent activity of Gülenists is the education which aims at creating *hybrid spaces* “where a cross-fertilization of religious and secular ideas takes place, are crucial for the construction of a spiritually and morally oriented society that is at the same time modern and progressive.”<sup>534</sup> The Movement’s “ostensible aims and ideals are comparable to the Roman Catholic Jesuits: both give major emphasis to secular education, which in the case of Gülen amounts to hundreds of institutions all over the world”<sup>535</sup>. The intellectually stimulated and spiritually vibrant people that would go through these educational institutions would, ideally, and constitute the “golden generation”, in Gülen’s coinage of the word. Creating a space for piety and professional success and maintaining a moderate interpretation that is open to the influence of modernity constituted gravity towards GM, which then grew in post-Soviet countries in 1990s and in the West in 2000s, partly in response to the search for moderate Islam.

However, the Movement has almost never presented a clear-cut stance that includes a certain perspective at the cost of excluding other perspectives and individuals. This, perhaps, was opted for catching as many people as possible and maintaining a broad space of manoeuvre. The less-than-specific attitude also enables diverse people to find room for themselves in the Movement and keep the differences to some extent. It also entails the leadership with a bigger space for discretion and control over the organization. This uncertainty, or rather *deliberate ambiguity* is strategically constructed and is a structural matter for the GM which involves not only the stance and discourse of the Movement but also the participation in it. “Indeed, the relative freedom of Gülen Movement affiliates to participate at different levels of dedication, and to express their individuality as journalists, writers, teachers, engineers, doctors, and business people, creates an organizational environment of ‘unified diversity’ that facilitates a graduated system of affiliation. For instance, when GM institutions in Turkey and in the United States invoke the same symbolic categories (e.g., “dialogue,” “tolerance,” “universal values”), they do so in a way that leaves room for interpretation.”<sup>536</sup>

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<sup>533</sup> Yavuz Hakan M. (2013), *ibid.*, p. 90.

<sup>534</sup> Yavuz Hakan M. (2013), *ibid.*, p. 95.

<sup>535</sup> Gözaydın İştâr, *The Fethullah Gülen Movement and Politics in Turkey: A Chance for Democratization or a Trojan horse?*, Democratization, 2009, vol. 16, p. 1214-1236.

<sup>536</sup> Hendrick Joshua, *Gülen: The Ambiguous Politics of Market Islam in Turkey and the World*, New York, NYU Press, 2013, p. 43.

In Europe the Movement anchored itself on the existing Turkish diaspora and remained significantly conservative compared to its presence in the United States. The established Liberal American tradition also fell in line with the opening that the Movement started to go through in Turkey in late 1990s. All in all, the Movement keeps its social, political and economic aims amorphous and when asked, its representatives give evasive answers. This uncertainty turns the GM into a *floating signifier* regardless of whether its aim is to create unity in diversity (principled) or justify itself in situations conflicting at times (pragmatic). The evasiveness has to do with the shallow conceptual penetration of its discourse and the manoeuvrability that the Movement enjoyed out of ambiguity.

*The ambiguity, here, opens a vast discursive space and empties it at the same time.* In such a context, some see the GM as an Islamic group that acknowledges social diversity, supports democracy and basic freedoms and negate violence through an interpretation of Islam and therefore frame it as a manifestation of moderate Islam that runs its activities in modern settings.<sup>537</sup> The ambiguity has been tightly related with the “hybrid characteristic” that it exhibited in its institutions and activities. In its schools that reach the total number of 2000 about half of which were in Turkey<sup>538</sup> and the rest spread around the world<sup>539</sup>, the Movement executes two things at the same time; an official education with a transparent curriculum and moral teachings that are rooted in Islamic spiritualism. While the former is publicly acknowledged, the latter is kept somewhat private, constituting a hybrid practice and reinforcing the inherent ambiguity.

#### **2.2.4.1. Staffing in State Institutions and the Gülenist Establishment**

Another major reason for the ambiguity of the GM was its powerful presence in Turkish bureaucracy. When the public discussion on impartiality of the judiciary and law enforcement gained momentum in 2010, Deniz Baykal, the then chairman of the main opposition CHP underlined a partisan staffing in these institutions: “Using the executive power, AKP imposes its opinions to judiciary and intimidates those who resist...Under the protection of government, an establishment of a religious community (referring to Gülenists)

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<sup>537</sup>Ebaugh H. R., *The Gülen Movement: A Sociological Analysis of a Civic Movement Rooted in Moderate Islam*, Springer, New York, 2010, p. 2.

<sup>538</sup>Kamusaati, *Dünya’da FETÖ İle Bağlantılı Kaç Okul ve Üniversite Var?*, (How Many Schools and Universities are Affiliated with FETO?), Kamusaati.com, 2016, available here: <https://www.kamusaati.com/gundem/dunya-da-feto-baglanti-kac-okul-ve-universite-var-h14188.html>, last accessed on 05.07.2020.

<sup>539</sup>Pew Research Center, *Gülen Movement*, Pew Research Center, 2010, available here: <https://www.pewforum.org/2010/09/15/muslim-networks-and-movements-in-western-europe-gulen-movement/>, last accessed on 05.07.2020.

has put judiciary and law enforcement under control.”<sup>540</sup> Baykal’s statements reflect that the AKP had the desire to control the judiciary even before the changes brought by the referendum that put HSYK and AYM under executive control, and has done that through staffing. Furthermore, the Party did not have its partisan cadres to fill critical positions, therefore prioritized the GM affiliated people in these institutions for staffing and promotions who shared the same perspective on disarticulation of the secularist establishment. *For the organized presence in bureaucracy that they exhibited and the autonomous agenda that they followed, it would be fair to call them the “Gülenist establishment”.*

Another institution that was debated for staffing by the public was the Student Selection and Placement Centre (ÖSYM) that organizes and executes the central university admission system. University education has been important in Turkey as a social ladder in terms of individual aspirations and for creating an educated elite regarding the GM. The critics of the GM claimed that the Movement exploited this institution to create advantages for its participants, yet the president of the institution argued that employment at ÖSYM was conducted in full transparency and the interviews were recorded on video for accountability purposes.<sup>541</sup> GM has explained its success in university education through being an education-oriented movement and denied involvement in any abuse of power at ÖSYM or similar institutions in line with its established discourse of denial of organized presence in bureaucracy.

The purge they went through after the 2016 coup attempt in Turkey exhibits the proportions of GM affiliated people in civil service. Based on the members of judiciary who were purged because of their –presumed- affiliation with the GM after the coup attempt, CHP conducted a retrospective study on the number of Gülenists within judiciary. According to the study, while the –presumably- Gülenist cadres amounted up to 15% of the judges and prosecutors between 1980 and 2002, it increased to 35% between 2002 and 2016. Breaking in down to periods, CHP’s study discloses that while the number of Gülen-affiliated members of judiciary has been 35% between 2002 and 2010, 41% between 2010 and 2013 and 25% between 2013 and 2016.<sup>542</sup> The calculations were made based on the entry years of Gülenists

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<sup>540</sup>T24, *Türkiye’de cemaat kadrolaşması var*, (There is Gülenist Staffing in Turkey), T24, 2010, available here: <https://t24.com.tr/haber/turkiyede-cemaat-kadrolasmasi-var,70761>, last accessed on 05.07.2020.

<sup>541</sup>Haber 3, *ÖSYM Başkanlığı Cemaatçi Kadrolaşma İddiasını Yalanladı*, (ÖSYM Denies Gülenist Staffing), Haber 3, 2014, available here: <https://www.haber3.com/guncel/osym-baskanligi-cemaatci-kadrolasma-iddiasini-yalanladi-haberi-3059516>, last accessed on 05.07.2020.

<sup>542</sup>Koç Uğur, *CHP Sayılarla Ortaya Koydu: Cemaatin Yargıdaki Kadrolaşması AKP Döneminde İki Kat Artmış*, (CHP Quantified the Doubling of Gülenists in the AKP Period), Birgün, 2017, available here: <https://www.birgun.net/haber/chp-sayilarla-ortaya-koydu-cemaatin-yargidaki-kadrolasmasi-akp-doneminde->

to judiciary. The study ignored two key parameters; a) the staffing was not differentiated from meritocratic employment, b) parameters of assignment in judiciary were not disclosed in relation to the people referred. However, the significant increase in numbers in the AKP period still suggests that the symbiotic relationship between the AKP and GM manifested in bureaucracy. The increase can be regarded as fruits of the struggle against the common enemy of the AKP and GM; the secularist establishment. All things considered, the *Ergenekon* and *Balyoz* cases would not be possible without, a) an organized structure that is strong enough and motivated to remove the establishment, and b) a strong executive that is determined to place political and discursive will behind the cases. The cooperation between the AKP and GM created an unrivalled symbiosis to remove the secularist establishment.

At discursive level, the GM has always had an evasive responding to the claims of staffing in bureaucracy. Gülen himself has neither accepted the staffing nor clearly denied it. He took the question on a legal basis and defining it as a civic right of employment he argued that these institutions are open to every citizen of the country. He frames presence of his followers in bureaucracy through the sympathy they have for his ideas and deems it quite normal to get employed in public service.<sup>543</sup> Yet, handling the issue on a legal basis and resorting to ambiguity render far from providing a clear stance to broad public. Because the main reason of complaint about Gülenist presence in bureaucracy is about its organized nature and autonomous agenda. The public is also disturbed by the probable presence of an alternative chain of command in issues that are critical to the Movement, especially in police, which is not acceptable by any stretch of legal or political imagination. Therefore, Gülen's discourse is far from filling or dominating the discursive space and creates a vital vulnerability in its justification and defence.

The “autonomous structure” of the Movement played a key role in the overall execution of *Ergenekon* and *Balyoz* cases, yet did not harness a public appreciation for this role as the GM denied an organized presence and autonomous agenda. Soon after they disarticulated the establishment the AKP and GM started having conflicts in their political preferences. Essentially, this was inevitable because the AKP and GM were separate powers that aligned for the common cause of disarticulation of the secularist establishment and completed each other in a symbiotic manner. The organized GM structure in judiciary and law enforcement was the only powerhouse that the AKP could utilize in its struggle against the

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[iki-kat-artmis-164277](#), last accessed on 05.07.2020.

<sup>543</sup>Herkul Nagma (2010), *ibid.*, last accessed on 08.07.2020.



then-dominant secularist establishment.<sup>544</sup> Upon the neutralization of common enemy, they have turned on each other. The details of the symbiosis-turned-antagonism that shaped the whole decade of 2010s is further examined in the next chapter.

#### 2.2.4.2. The Mavi Marmara Incident: *The Beginning of the Inevitable Discord*

The concerted act between the AKP and Gülenists against secularist establishment has been overrated by broad public and the analysts that overlooked the nature of relationship between the two. Stealing from hard sciences, the relationship, or rather the harmony between the two, was basically a *resonance*, which is defined in simple terms as; “the state of a system in which an abnormally large vibration is produced in response to an external stimulus, occurring when the frequency of the stimulus is the same, or nearly the same, as the natural vibration frequency of the system.”<sup>545</sup> The disturbance (external stimulus) on both the AKP and GM was created by the same source; the secularist establishment via its oppressive and exclusivist policies. Therefore, the two were resonated by the same threat yet remained in their separate formations with separate endgames. Another steal from Physics perhaps would complement the analogy: The togetherness between AKP and GM was more like a *superposition* of two separate waves, which stipulates that; “when two or more waves of the same type cross at some point, the resultant displacement at that point is equal to the sum of the displacements due to each individual wave.”<sup>546</sup> In plain English, when two waves travel in the same medium, they strengthen each other, only for the moment that they co-incident that is; use the same physical medium. In brief, having been resonated by the same source of threat, the AKP and GM *superposed* against it. Therefore, they had no internal agreement or even a consensus on how to proceed after the threat being removed. Perhaps the GM had bought into AKP’s initial reformism being something inherent, so the Party would move on in a similar direction even after the disarticulation of the establishment. There was a sizeable amount of wishful thinking involved in this because moving on with a reformist agenda would fall in line with the interests of a globally active GM.

Other than that, there is no indicator of a shared agenda between the two. First of all, the AKP and GM do not share substantial common grounds in terms of world view, both lacking a clear cut ideological structure. While the AKP stemmed from a political Islamist

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<sup>544</sup> Bayramoğlu Ali, *Demokratikleşme ve Tasfiye*, (Democratization and Purge), İlke Haber, 2012, available here: <https://www.ilkehaber.com/yazi/demokratikleşme-ve-tasfiye-3846.htm>, last accessed on 08.07.2020.

<sup>545</sup> Definition available at: <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/resonance>, last accessed on 10.07.2020.

<sup>546</sup> Definition available at: [https://isaacphysics.org/concepts/cp\\_superposition](https://isaacphysics.org/concepts/cp_superposition), last accessed on 10.07.2020.



tradition that stipulates regulating the public space with Islamic principles<sup>547</sup> -given that they exist- GM has started as a civic Islamic movement with a focus on social activism and individual spirituality, and evolved into a global movement with an embrace on modernity and diversity.<sup>548</sup> Second, after they disarticulated the secularist establishment, it was still in the interest of the GM to open further to the world and expand its sphere of influence, yet this was not the case for the AKP who did not need reformism to maintain power anymore. Therefore, while the Movement emphasized the global nature of the world, the AKP started resorting to isolationist nationalism. While the GM established itself as a pro-West global Movement, the AKP started giving signs of going further conservative as of the beginning of 2010s discarding pro-Western figures from its leadership. Third, there is no publicized contract or an agreement in principles between the two to make their superposition sustainable. They either supposed that they would maintain some sort of cohort because of mutual dependence or did not even intend on a sustainable relationship from the very beginning. While they shared allegiance to Islamic orthodoxy and tradition, they treat it in different ways: The AKP leadership sees the orthodoxy as a source of political identity the GM considers it as a source of spiritual inspiration. In other words, while the AKP followed the forms of the past the GM followed the content of it with the idea of morphing into something modern.

The Mavi Marmara incident functioned as a major indicator of the lack of even a basic consensus between the two. In May 2010, International Humanitarian Help (IHH), a Turkish relief organization close to the AKP government led a flotilla containing humanitarian aid and aid workers from various countries set out to break the siege in Gaza Strip. More than 1 million people living under Israeli blockade were in desperate need for aid and relieving them was the declared reason of the flotilla by IHH.<sup>549</sup>The Israeli authorities intercepted the flotilla in international waters and opened fire claiming the lives of 10 civilians with the pretext that they needed to check the boats. International society largely condemned the attack and UN Secretary General urged Israel to lift the blockade.<sup>550</sup>As the event dominated the Turkish

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<sup>547</sup>Karaman Hayrettin, *Siyasi İslam ve İslamcılık*, Yeni Şafak, 2017, available here: <https://www.yenisafak.com/yazarlar/hayrettinkaraman/siyasi-islam-ve-islamcilik-2037561>, last accessed on 09.07.2020.

<sup>548</sup>Alpay Şahin, *Gülen Hareketi Cemaat Değil Dinsel Akım*, (Gülen Movement a Religious Movement not a Community), Haber 7, 2012, available here: <https://www.haber7.com/partiler/haber/846814-gulen-hareketi-cemaat-degil-dinsel-akim>, last accessed on 09.07.2020.

<sup>549</sup>IHH, *Mavi Marmara*, IHH Website, available here: <https://www.ihh.org.tr/en/mavi-marmara>, last accessed on 10.07.2020.

<sup>550</sup>BBC, *Mavi Marmara: Why did Israel Stop the Gaza Flotilla?*, 2016, available here: <https://www.bbc.com/news/10203726>, last accessed on 10.07.2020.

political agenda, the media organs affiliated with the GM avoided antagonizing Israel like pro-AKP media who called Israel a “Zionist Regime” and “Buthcer Israel”.<sup>551</sup> Later the GM disapproved the flotilla organization altogether and criticized the AKP government for its support for the event since it was clear from the beginning that it risked the lives of many people for something less-than-possible. Gülen went further and presented a reconciliatory attitude with Israel and said: “The flotilla must have sought the permission of the Israeli authorities. Doing it without permission is a revolt against the authority”<sup>552</sup>. This statement reveals a pro-Western approach which is coherent in Gülen’s thought and falls in line with the interests of GM that aims to expand globally.

Erdoğan, on the other hand, endorsed IHH and praised its activities as heroic humanitarian aid activities that helped the needy around the world.<sup>553</sup> Having tolerated Gülen’s criticism in 2010, when they were still acting in tandem against the establishment, Erdoğan lashed out on Gülen in 2014 and juxtaposed him with Israel: “What did he (Gülen) say? They must have sought the permission of the authority. Who is the authority? Is it their loved ones in the south (Israel) or us? If it is us in Turkey, we have given the permission already.”<sup>554</sup> Erdoğan knew very well how denigrating it was to juxtapose someone with Israel in the eyes of conservative masses. “The flotilla event was... not the only event in which the Gülen movement resisted and challenged the government. These disagreements and differences have been conveniently dismissed, if not strategically ignored, both by scholars and lay people.”<sup>555</sup> However, it was the first public discord between the two on a major political issue, which would be followed by GM’s stance on Gezipark Protests and eventually escalate into an all-out war, in a couple years’ time.

The flotilla incident disclosed an increasing confidence on the side of the AKP. As of 2010, it enjoyed the biggest public support easily, rendered the secularist establishment

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<sup>551</sup>Durna Tezcan, Özçetin Burak, “Mavi Marmara on the News: Convergence and Divergence in Religious Conservative Newspapers in Turkey”, *Middle East Journal of Culture and Communication*, 2012, vol. 5, p. 261-281.

<sup>552</sup>NTV, *Fethullah Gülen: İsrail'den İzin Almalıydılar*, (They Must Have Sought the Permission of Israel), NTV, 2010, available here: <https://www.ntv.com.tr/dunya/fethullah-gulen-israilden-izin-almaliydilar-%2ckIC-HTknlEavwlzh-VOxdg>, last accessed on 10.07.2020.

<sup>553</sup>Odatv, *Mavi Marmara için "Bana Mı Sordunuz" Diyen Erdoğan Bakın O Gün Ne Demişti*, (What had Erdoğan Said about Mavi Marmara Back in Time Who Now Says; Did You Ask Me?), Odatv, 2016, available here: <https://odatv4.com/mavi-marmara-icin-bana-mi-sordunuz-diyen-erdogan-bakin-o-gun-ne-demisti-2906161200.html>, last accessed on 10.07.2020.

<sup>554</sup>Son Vesayet, *Edoğan'ın Mavi Marmara Satışı*, (Erdoğan’s U Turn on Mavi Marmara), YouTube, 2016, available here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sd4gRpxPgK4>, last accessed on 10.07.2020.

<sup>555</sup>Turam Berna (ed.), *Secular State Religious Society: Two Forces in Play in Turkey*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2012, p. 2.

dysfunctional in alliance with GM if not totally disarticulated, and secured a significant Western support. The Gülenists on the other side enjoyed exercising power within state institutions not constrained by any concern of public accountability as they were not a political party. As the GM disowned its bureaucratic extension at discursive level, the Gülenists in key state positions had no representative status and therefore, did not refrain from exercising influence on the political space. Despite the presence of irreconcilable differences, AKP and GM maintained their superposition for while, which is largely enabled by pragmatic and leader-oriented structures and ambiguous policies that both of them employed.

### **2.2.5.2011 Elections: *Establishment of Electoral Hegemony***

Exercising effective blows to disarticulate the military wing of the secularist establishment with *Ergenekon* and *Balyoz* cases and changing the power configuration of its judicial wing, AYM and HYSK, with the Constitutional amendments of 2010 referendum, Erdoğan was enjoying an unrivalled capacity of political mobilization in the run up of 2011 general elections. It was the first election that was held on time in the last 34 years, which rendered positive for the last two terms of the AKP that the Party has established a political stability. Winning 50% of the votes in the elections, Erdoğan erected himself as the most popular politician in the last half century of Turkey.<sup>556</sup> Erdoğan's persona as a leader came to the fore as it was stated by a pro-Erdoğan daily, *YeniŞafak*, in its headline upon the election victory: "Victory of the Master"<sup>557</sup>.

The election manifesto of the AKP started with identification with the "nation" and the confidence in the nation in a celebratory tone reflecting a victorious psyche. Referring to its initial motto, "we are against 3Ys: corruption (*yolsuzluk*), poverty (*yoksulluk*) and prohibitions (*yasaklar*)", the AKP defined its success primarily on these three issues, exhibiting consistency and adherence to its promises. Referring to the centennial of the Republic's foundation (1923), the Party crafted "2023 Targets", indicating a positioning that implies centrality and sustainability. Setting 2 trillion USD as GDP and 500 billion USD as the export targets, the AKP's campaign heavily relied on developmentalism, the concept that has been dominated by the AKP since its accession into power.<sup>558</sup> The 2023 targets also imply two

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<sup>556</sup>Yeni Şafak, *Başarının Sırrı Erdoğan: 2011 Genel Seçimi*, (Erdoğan, the Secret of Success in 2011 Elections), Yeni Şafak, available here: <https://www.yenisafak.com/secim-2011>, last accessed on 11.07.2020.

<sup>557</sup>Details available here: [https://image.yenisafak.com/resim/imagecrop/2017/04/06/10/58/resized\\_d861b-523439232011secimi.png](https://image.yenisafak.com/resim/imagecrop/2017/04/06/10/58/resized_d861b-523439232011secimi.png), last accessed on 11.07.2020.

<sup>558</sup> Ak Parti, *2011 Seçim Beyannamesi*, (2011 Election Manifesto), 2011, Ak Parti, available here: <https://www.akparti.org.tr/media/318778/12-haziran-2011-genel-secimleri-secim-beyannamesi-1.pdf>, last accessed on 11.07.2020.

things; a) they would be attained only with Erdoğan's leadership and the AKP, b) Erdoğan is a political figure with the grandeur of historical importance that is comparable to that of the founding father of the country, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk.

With 2011 elections, the AKP has proved that it dwarfed the secularist establishment to the point of political dysfunction and ripped off the government claims of the opposition altogether. However, the strategy of patience that the AKP embraced from its very accession to power was still in place. In a television program before the elections, when Erdoğan was asked why they did not nominate any female candidate with headscarf he responded that they would proceed with caution and avoid tension.<sup>559</sup> Yet creating a significant credibility from the past success of the AKP, Erdoğan "upped the game" with 2023 targets and identified them as the new destination of his developmentalism. In symbolic terms, this signifies the AKP's takeover of Republican discourse which had initially been framed as developmentalism through secularist nation building. The major slogans used in the election process were; "A dream came true", "Turkey is ready: Target is 2023", "Let Stability Prevail, Let Turkey Grow". Erdoğan was presented as the chief architect of the stability and growth, and assurance of Turkey's promises. Landmark projects, such as Canal Istanbul, the new airport in Istanbul and the suspension bridge near Istanbul, have been promoted in the election process. As a complementary to its neo-liberal policies, and a sign of increased state capacity, the AKP also emphasized alleviation of social inequality through state assistance such as; paying minimum wage to those who looked after their disabled children and distributing textbooks free of charge at schools.<sup>560</sup>

Alongside AKP's emphasis on stability and growth, which dominated the election process, Kurdish issue and the New Constitution were the major items on the public debate. On the Kurdish issue, Erdoğan started employing a hawkish discourse and reversed the previously launched process of Kurdish Opening and his own recognition of "Kurdish issue" into the previous stance of Turkish state. He reminded that the AKP lifted the state of emergency in predominantly Kurdish areas, got the works of famous Kurdish scholar translated by the Ministry of Culture, started allowing Kurdish writings in public places, opened departments at universities about Kurdish culture and has been dealing with

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<sup>559</sup>Subaşı94, Başbakan Erdoğan Siyaset Meydanı Seçim Özel'de - 7 (Prime Minister Erdoğan on Selection Special of Political Arena-7), YouTube, 2011, available here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-MSplK1h2ho>, last accessed on 12.07.2020.

<sup>560</sup>Göksu Oğuz, "Ak Parti'nin Seçim Stratejileri ve Siyasal Kampanyaları: 2002-2014 Dönem Analizi", *Turkish Studies: Social Sciences*, 2019, vol. 14, no. 3, p. 589-621.

the socio-economic issues of the Kurds from infrastructure to education and health services. *He eventually claimed that the Kurdish issue has ceased to exist as a categoric problem.* Then Erdoğan framed the demands of pro-Kurdish politics, such as education in the mother tongue as divisive, and securitized the issue in a framework not very different from that of the secularist establishment.<sup>561</sup> This has gone in parallel with AKPs decreasing voteshare from predominantly Kurdish areas and a steady increase that it enjoyed from the Turkish nationalist votes. As its votes increased across Turkey in general, in significant cities of predominantly Kurdish southeastern cities, the AKP lost to pro Kurdish candidates who joined the elections as independent candidates because of the 10% election threshold.<sup>562</sup> This is one of the examples that exhibit how AKP's discourse is re-framed based on its popular support.

A freedom oriented new Constitution was another major item in the election process. Erdoğan argued that they had been working with NGOs, scholars and legal experts on a civil, participatory and democratic Constitution. He also claimed that they have been seeking consensus with other initiatives that have been preparing draft constitutions. As the new Constitution would bring the individual to the fore rather than the state security, it will expand the sphere of basic rights and freedoms. Interestingly, he avoided persistent questions on whether the new Constitution would involve a transition into presidential system and he would want to run for it. The first Constitutional referendum after this election came in 2017 and changed the Parliamentary system into Presidential one. Therefore, it would be fair to assume that once again, Erdoğan followed a strategy of patience and it paid off.

In his victory speech, Erdoğan emphasized the establishment of democracy and argued that Turkish democracy reached an exemplary level for the rest of the world as Turkey has reached the civilisational level of the West, referring to the founding ideology of the Republic.<sup>563</sup> This implies a feeling of accomplishment and obsolescence of reforms at the same time in regards to democratic credentials. In other words, this signifies an official recognition of the end of reformism by the very leader who started it. Underlying this argument lays Erdoğan's consent with the state of affairs in terms of power configuration of the state. In the victory speech he still maintained a discursive stance in terms of democracy and

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<sup>561</sup>Subaşı94, Başbakan Erdoğan Siyaset Meydanı Seçim Özel'de -3 (Prime Minister Erdoğan on Selection Special of Political Arena-3), YouTube, 2011, available here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Wv1b8N3LSQ>, last accessed on 12.07.2020.

<sup>562</sup>Yeğen Mesut, "The 2011 Elections and the Kurdish Question", *InsightTurkey*, 2011, vol. 13, no. 4, p. 147-169.

<sup>563</sup>Mersin Gündem Videolar, *Başbakan Recep Tayyip Erdoğan'ın Balkon Konuşması*, (The Balcony Speech of Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan), 2011, YouTube, available here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dJJGn-hRMeQ>, last accessed on 13.07.2020.

human rights, that is to say, de-securitization for the purposes of this study. However, he framed them as dependent upon his persona, signifying charismatic authority rather than legal-rational one.

All in all, 2011 disclosed the fact that the AKP was appreciated by the electorate for its overall government performance and struggle against tutelary secularist establishment. Increasing its vote share after two terms in government to 50% also indicated that the Party consolidated itself in the center right. Having the secularist establishment ripped off its political capacity with *Ergenekon* and *Balyoz* cases, and changes in seizing control in high judiciary through the amendments of 2010 referendum, the AKP has become the primary political actor in a majoritarian understanding. “Further, election results have in recent years taken on increasing importance as atool of political dominance...Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has justified most of his government’s democratically controversial policies with the crude understanding of ‘majority rule’.”<sup>564</sup>Majoritarianism simply fit the interests of the AKP that has secured the highest amount of votes it since its first election. After the elections, there was a political arena where the AKP controlled the presidency, major municipalities and the Parliament, and therefore, monopolized power in democratic settings, be it a majoritarian one. Such a power consolidation however, would soon result in deterioration in transparency and accountability, and render the parliament dysfunctional as the legislative branch of the state to oversee the executive.<sup>565</sup> In parallel to the accumulation of power in the hands of Erdoğan and his Party, significant restrictions would be applied on the exercise of basic right and freedoms on select groups that deem dissent for the AKP rule. In other words, *the reformist politics had become obsolete for the AKP as they served their primary aim of disarticulating the establishment*, supporting the argument of this study that the reforms were existential in the consolidation of power for the AKP, yet, as they have never been essential the Party would discard them in an increasing pace.

### **2.2.6. Reforms: Stagnation and Obsolescence**

The 2008 EU Progress Report brings the *Ergenekon* trials to the fore and emphasizes the alleged violation of rights of the accused people despite the established perspective that it hastrials targeting the tutelary bureaucracy of Turkey. AKP’s amendments on the Constitution

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<sup>564</sup>Toker Cem, “Elections in Turkey: Fair or Fraud-ridden?”, *Turkish Policy Quarterly*, 2014, vol. 12, no. 4, p. 116.

<sup>565</sup>Gumuscu Sebnem, Keyman E. Fuat, *Islamism, Electoral Hegemony and Democracy: Lessons from Turkey, Egypt And Tunisia*, German Marshall Fund of the United States, 2013, available here: <https://www.gmfus.org/publications/islamism-electoral-hegemony-and-democracy-lessons-turkey-egypt-and-tunisia>, last accessed on 13.07.2020.



pertaining to lifting the headscarf ban was legislated in the Parliament yet CHP took the matter to AYM and the Court cancelled it with the justification that it was against the secular nature of the state.<sup>566</sup> The decisions of the Court on political matters largely depend on the configuration of its members rather than the stipulations of the Constitution. Despite an increasing civilian oversight on TAF, it was not politically neutralized yet as “the armed forces have continued to exercise significant political influence via formal and informal mechanisms. Senior members of the armed forces have expressed their opinion on domestic and foreign policy issues going beyond their remit...”<sup>567</sup> The Report also mentions that the CHP took 16 legislations to AYM (some being about EU Access reforms), showcasing the distance that the secularist actors had with the demands of EU. In the Report, the AKP government is criticized for a weak momentum for the reforms: “...despite its strong political mandate, the government did not put forward a consistent and comprehensive programme of political reforms...”<sup>568</sup> As the open debate on Turkish media is hailed, the infamous Anti-Terror Law is criticized for its application on non-violent expressions of Kurdish demands. The legal framework of freedom to assembly falls in line with that of EU yet arbitrary limitations are brought for pro-Kurdish and labor union protests and the Alevis are rejected in their demands on the official recognition of their gathering places (Cemevi) as prayer houses.<sup>569</sup>

The 2008 Report of FH mentions the tension that the EU related reforms created between the government and secularist bureaucracy as a hindrance of reformist agenda: “Segments of the bureaucracy appear to purposefully rebel against reforms they see as threatening to Turkey's secular system. This internal tension has jeopardized Turkey's democratic progress, as well as its EU aspirations.”<sup>570</sup> The FH Report also recognizes the improvements in civilian oversight of TAF, especially through changes in MGK, yet it underlines the limited civilian audit in military expenditure and TAF's efforts of exercising political influence on society through speeches of top-ranking commanders beyond their legitimate realm of function. The issue of freedom of expression observed de-securitization and re-securitization in 2008: While the prohibition of Kurdish is lifted in media, the anti-

<sup>566</sup> See page 6 of Turkey 2008 Progress Report:

[https://www.ab.gov.tr/files/AB\\_Iliskileri/Tur\\_En\\_Realitons/Progress/turkey\\_progress\\_report\\_2008.pdf](https://www.ab.gov.tr/files/AB_Iliskileri/Tur_En_Realitons/Progress/turkey_progress_report_2008.pdf), last accessed on 14.07.2020

<sup>567</sup> See page 9 of 2008 Progress Report.

<sup>568</sup> See page 7 of 2008 Progress Report.

<sup>569</sup> See page 17-18 of 2008 Progress Report.

<sup>570</sup> See page 725 of Freedom in the World 2008 Report, available here:

[https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/2020-02/Freedom\\_in\\_the\\_World\\_2008\\_complete\\_book.pdf](https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/2020-02/Freedom_in_the_World_2008_complete_book.pdf), last accessed on 17.07.2020

terror law reinstated prison charges for journalists. The Report also acknowledges the assertive secularism of Turkey as a source of securitization: “The Turkish republic's official secularism has in practice led to considerable state control of religion. Women wearing headscarves are not allowed in public universities and government offices, and observant men are dismissed from the military.”<sup>571</sup> While freedom of assembly is observed to be respected, the trade union activities are still restricted in practice, indicating a selective permissibility and neo-liberal mindset of the AKP government.

Regarding the *Ergenekon* trials, the 2009 EU Access Report puts forward that “this case is an opportunity for Turkey to strengthen confidence in the proper functioning of its democratic institutions and the rule of law. It is important that proceedings in this context fully respect the due process of law, in particular the rights of the defendants.”<sup>572</sup> Despite the tangible improvement in civilian oversight of military, the tutelary role of TAF has not been totally removed since no change has been made on its TAF’s Internal Service Law and on the Law that pertains to MGK. In the same line, no improvement was made on Parliamentary oversight of the military budget.<sup>573</sup> Although the Report acknowledges the improvements in judiciary through reforms, it raised concerns on overall impartiality effectiveness and independence of judiciary and relates it to the configuration of HSYK. Regarding the freedom of expression, the Report underlines that the “...article 301 of the Turkish Criminal Code (TCC) is no longer used systematically to restrict freedom of expression. Revision of this article led to a significant decline in prosecutions compared with previous years”.<sup>574</sup>

2009 Report of FH speaks in favour of the AKP government regarding the civilian oversight of TAF yet maintains a critical position for the Party’s performance in media freedom. “Media outlets report various other forms of interference, and cartoonists have complained of increasing censorship for their portrayals of the president and prime minister. Nearly all media organizations are owned by giant holding companies with interests in other sectors, which contribute to self-censorship by journalists.”<sup>575</sup> 2009 Report of HRW on Turkey underlines stalling of reforms and restrictions exercised on non-violent protests, yet it

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<sup>571</sup>See page 727 of 2008 Report.

<sup>572</sup> See page 6 of Turkey 2009 Progress Report:

[https://www.ab.gov.tr/files/AB\\_Iliskileri/Tur\\_En\\_Realitons/Progress/turkey\\_progress\\_report\\_2009.pdf](https://www.ab.gov.tr/files/AB_Iliskileri/Tur_En_Realitons/Progress/turkey_progress_report_2009.pdf), last accessed on 14.07.2020

<sup>573</sup> See page 10 of 2009 Progress Report.

<sup>574</sup> See page 17 of 2009 Progress Report.

<sup>575</sup> See page 736 of Freedom in the World 2009 Report, available here:

[https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/2020-02/Freedom\\_in\\_the\\_World\\_2009\\_complete\\_book.pdf](https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/2020-02/Freedom_in_the_World_2009_complete_book.pdf), last accessed on 17.07.2020



also hails freedom of expression despite hindrances still in place, such as; anti-terror law. Referring to initial phase of *Ergenekon* trial as an opportunity to remove the tutelary structures in Turkish politics, the HRW report remains critical on the impunity that security forces enjoyed in their violations of human rights in the process.<sup>576</sup>

The 2010 Report explicitly acknowledges that it finds the allegations in *Ergenekon* trials credible, yet it expresses concerns about violations of defendants' rights such as long pre-trial detention. "Overall, the investigation into the alleged criminal network, *Ergenekon*, and the probe into several other coup plans remain an opportunity for Turkey to strengthen confidence in the proper functioning of its democratic institutions and the rule of law."<sup>577</sup> Yet, in the same year, pro-Kurdish DTP whose case was pending at AYM was shut down and this is registered as a setback on the axis of democratic reforms. The measures that the government took to expedite the accession process, after years of slowing down were hailed in the Report. With respect to civilian oversight of the military institutions, "the government annulled the secret protocol on Security, Public Order and Assistance Units (commonly called EMASYA), which allowed military operations to be carried out without the consent of civilian authorities."<sup>578</sup> This is an important step for disarticulation of tutelary institutions since EMASYA placed security concerns above other issues shrinking the public space and overriding civilian authority in an extra-legal method. However, "no change has been made to the Turkish Armed Forces Internal Service Law, which defines the duties of the military and contains an article leaving the military wide room for manoeuvre to intervene into politics... No progress has been made concerning parliamentary oversight of the defence budget..."<sup>579</sup> In general, the 2010 Report sees the changes in the structures of AYM and HSYK positive steps in terms of judicial independence and impartiality.

2010 Report acclaims the Democratic Opening of the AKP government towards Kurds as an initiative to end the Kurdish issue through cultural and linguistic liberation. Yet, upon AYM's closure of the pro-Kurdish DTP with the allegations that it became the focal point of terrorism, the Opening was cut short with the mass protests of Kurds across the country.<sup>580</sup>

<sup>576</sup>The 2009 HRW Report on Turkey is available here: <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2009/country-chapters/turkey>, last accessed on 22.07.2020.

<sup>577</sup> See page 7 of Turkey 2010 Progress Report: [https://www.ab.gov.tr/files/AB\\_Iliskileri/Tur\\_En\\_Realitons/Progress/turkey\\_progress\\_report\\_2010.pdf](https://www.ab.gov.tr/files/AB_Iliskileri/Tur_En_Realitons/Progress/turkey_progress_report_2010.pdf), last accessed on 15.07.2020

<sup>578</sup> See page 10 of 2010 Progress Report.

<sup>579</sup> See page 11-12 of 2010 Progress Report.

<sup>580</sup> See page 674 of Freedom in the World 2010 Report, available here: [https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/2020-03/FIW\\_2010\\_Complete\\_Book\\_Scan.pdf](https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/2020-03/FIW_2010_Complete_Book_Scan.pdf), last accessed on 17.07.2020

With the closure of DTP, a key initiative started by the executive branch of (AKP) Turkish Republic was aborted by the key court of its judicial branch (AYM). For the purposes of this study, the de-securitizing effort of the AKP was aborted with a re-securitizing stance of the AYM. While use of Kurdish is permitted by law, pro-Kurdish politicians and media organs were prosecuted with terrorism-related charges, again, disclosing the discrepancy between the executive and judiciary. Yet, the Report also identifies that the judiciary has become a field of contestation between the AKP and the secularist establishment, which was framed as “the war of cadres” previously in this dissertation.

2010 HRW Report sees the Kurdish Opening as a sign of restart for the reforms that stalled for years. Yet, “The Constitutional Court’s decision in December to close down the pro-Kurdish Democratic Society Party (DTP) for separatist activities constituted a setback to efforts to solve the Kurdish problem in Turkey.”<sup>581</sup> It acclaims AKP’s efforts to establish civilian control over the military and the legislation made in this context. In terms of freedom of expression, 2010 witnessed setbacks that came through AKP government’s pressure on a critical media outlet (Doğan Media Group) with selective practice of tax evasion fines that could potentially end the overall functioning of the outlets. However, the same years also exhibited lifting of the restrictions on non-Turkish broadcasting which was crowned with opening of a state-run television channel that broadcasted in Kurdish. Therefore, it would be fair to claim that the government de-securitized the Kurdish language for potential Kurdish voter yet securitized the critical media for the damage it could possibly exercise.

The 2011 Report deems 2011 general elections free, fair and successful in terms of execution of the process. The *Balyoz* case is taken as credible despite rising concerns about the justification of long detention periods and violations of defendants’ rights. It mentions the seizure of Ahmet Şık’s critical book about the GM, “İmamınOrdusu” (Imam’s Army) as another source of concern for the democratic credentials of those who prosecuted the *Ergenekon* and *Balyoz* investigations.<sup>582</sup> The Report applauds the developments in civilian oversight of the TAF through three cases; the rewriting of National Security Document by a predominantly civilian group, civilian audit of military expenditure and opening the MGK decisions to civilian judicial review.<sup>583</sup> With the influence of Justice Minister on HSYK being

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<sup>581</sup>The 2010 HRW Report on Turkey is available here: <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2010/country-chapters/europe/central-asia>, last accessed on 22.07.2020.

<sup>582</sup> See page 6 of Turkey 2011 Progress Report: [https://www.ab.gov.tr/files/AB\\_Iliskileri/AdaylikSureci/IlerlemeRaporlari/tr\\_rapport\\_2011\\_en.pdf](https://www.ab.gov.tr/files/AB_Iliskileri/AdaylikSureci/IlerlemeRaporlari/tr_rapport_2011_en.pdf), last accessed on 15.07.2020

<sup>583</sup>See page 13-14 of 2011 Progress Report.

decreased and individual application to AYM being introduced means of seeking justice in the country expanded. The Report hails the freedom of expression, assembly and association and frames them as being near-EU standards regarding their legal framework.

2011 FH Report underlines the Kurdish opening that the AKP launched in 2009 and expresses frustration for the setback that it exhibited in 2010 and 2011. As Constitutional Court shut down the pro-Kurdish DTP and prosecuted its leadership alongside municipal mayors and local Kurdish leaders for the membership of KCK, the Opening slowed down to a complete halt. Interestingly, the KCK prosecutions were believed to be run by Gülenists in law enforcement that took a hawkish position and prevented AKP government's efforts of de-securitization. The Report also mentions a "balancing" of freedom of expression that is secured in the Constitution with framing it in the jurisdiction of Anti-Terror Law that has been very restrictive.<sup>584</sup>

2011 HRW Report starts with a clear statement: "Turkey's human rights record remained mixed in 2010. Arbitrary detentions, prosecutions, and convictions under terrorism laws and for speech crimes persisted, while the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) partially amended the constitution."<sup>585</sup> It regards the Kurdish Opening as an attempt that fell far too short compared to its initial intentions because of the closure of Pro-Kurdish DTP by the Constitutional Court and the prosecution of PKK-connected KCK. 2012 HRW Report puts forward that "human rights suffered setbacks at home. The government has not prioritized human rights reforms since 2005, and freedom of expression and association have both been damaged by the ongoing prosecution and incarceration of journalists, writers, and hundreds of Kurdish political activists..."<sup>586</sup> The Report also evaluates the absence of a political resolution in the Kurdish issue as the most important obstacle to progress human rights in Turkey.

A TESEV report, "Modernity does not Tolerate Superstition: The Religious and Seculars in the Democratization Process", puts forward that as of 2011, after a decade of somewhat reformist and centre-right oriented AKP rule, the doubts and concerns that the AKP has always had a hidden agenda of Islamizing the state and the society were very vibrant among secularist elite, and this was the reason of resistance to EU access reforms that the

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<sup>584</sup>See page 690 of Freedom in the World 2011 Report, available here: [https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/2020-02/Freedom\\_in\\_the\\_World\\_2011\\_complete\\_book.pdf](https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/2020-02/Freedom_in_the_World_2011_complete_book.pdf), last accessed on 22.07.2020.

<sup>585</sup>The 2011 HRW Report on Turkey is available here: <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2011/country-chapters/turkey>, last accessed on 23.07.2020.

<sup>586</sup>The 2012 HRW Report on Turkey is available here: <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2012/country-chapters/turkey>, last accessed on 23.07.2020.

Party carried out.<sup>587</sup> Another TESEV report entitled “Does Media Policy Promote Media Freedom and Independence?” examines the media sector where the AKP has started exercising restrictive, in other words securitizing policies. Drawing the attention to authoritarian provisions and impunity-based practices of anti-terror law and penal code, it puts forward that excessively vague and inclusive definition of terrorism has been exploited by the AKP government to suppress the activists, politicians, journalists and other figures of dissent. The Report remains critical on the practices of AKP about freedom of expression, which have mostly been mentioned in an affirming tone in the EU Progress Reports. “While there is a formal commitment to freedom of expression, freedom of the press and freedom of information in Turkey’s laws, what lies beyond this seemingly liberal facade is a framework where nationalism, statism and cultural conservatism are the supreme values looming over individual rights.”<sup>588</sup> In other words, it argues that *a conservative statism and nationalism remained as the supreme and governing values of Turkish Republic at the backdrop of the reforms*. It also discloses that media ownership by huge conglomerates that carry out business in public as well as private sector makes the owner “refrain from building adversarial relations with the state, the emergence and survival of an independent media proves difficult”. Therefore, in the essence, freedom of speech has been under pressure from within the media outlet for profit purposes and from without by regulatory state institutions and law. All in all, according to the Report, “the lack of a strong pro-democracy social movement, the ideological conservatism of the judiciary, the institutional weakness of the parliament and the lack of democracy within political parties render the government –and future governments– too powerful vis-à-vis the society and the media.”<sup>589</sup>

According to what filters through from these reports, Turkey has accomplishment improvements on issues like freedom of expression and assembly, removal of bureaucratic tutelage and Kurdish issue, despite the waning momentum towards the end of this period. However, another major oppressive tool, the Anti-Terror Law remained unchanged. Therefore, it may fairly be alleged that while the government reduced the capacity of bureaucratic tutelage over which it had limited control, it maintained its own capacity to do so. As the developments of the following decade indicated, this law was excessively and oppressively used by the AKP government to silence dissidence, thus, it was used to create a

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<sup>587</sup> Bayramoğlu Ali, *Modernity does not Tolerate Superstition: The Religious and Seculars in the Democratization Process*, TESEV Publications, 2011, p. 138.

<sup>588</sup> Kurban Dilek, Sözeri Ceren, *Does Media Policy Promote Media Freedom and Independence? The case of Turkey*, TESEV Publications, 2011, p. 38.

<sup>589</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 39.

civilian tutelage within and beyond legal boundaries. The reports also indicate that different powerhouses, (bureaucratic establishment *versus* government), can take opposing positions on the issues pertaining to securitization and utilize their capacity to see the desired ends in their own visions. Closure of DTP at the backdrop of Kurdish Opening sets an example to that.

## **Conclusion**

The AKP started its electoral term, 2007-2011, with an elevated self confidence: It had come out of the power struggle with the secularist establishment in 2007 and increased its popular support. This victory eased the pressure of reforms as there was no significant demand from the electorate on reforms and the EU access was far from realistic. The reforms that were *existential* in the first term (2002-2007) became gradually conjectural and eventually *obsolete* in the second term (2007-2011). Coming out of the first period with a practice of co-habitation with the secularist establishment successfully, the Party aimed at disarticulating the establishment through structural changes and staffing at key institutions in the second period. In other words, the AKP started its counter-attack on secularist establishment with the informal alliance that it formed with the Gülenist establishment in bureaucracy, and effectively rendering the secularists impotent, it removed the institutional-systemic pressure for de-securitization. Elevating the conservative mindset to higher grounds, at least in electoral terms and providing them full representation on the public space, it had only one major issue of de-securitization left; the Kurdish issue. The Opening that the Party initiated for Kurds and the following ebb and flow must be evaluated through a cost-benefit analysis. The Opening was resisted by the secularist camp (both by bureauacracy and political parties) and pulled in another direction by its ally, Gülenists, and therefore, it was slowed down to the point of complete halt.

### **a. Strategic Aims and Gains**

AKP started its second term in complete realization that as long as the secularist establishment existed, it would not be able to consolidate its rule. The Party had also seen the aggregate capacity of the secularist establishment through the power struggle that it had with them in 2007. As its un-subordinating attitude towards the pressure of the establishment was rewarded by an increasing popular support, it was time for the AKP to launch its counter campaign against the establishment. In alliance with the Gülenist establishment in the judiciary and law enforcement, the AKP launched the *Ergenekon* and *Balyoz* cases with the allegations of coup preparations. Bringing secularist establishment under judicial pressure, the

AKP did not only disarticulate the active structures within the establishment but also gave a strong message that such attempts would not enjoy impunity in the future. Barely surviving the closure case at Constitutional Court, the AKP expanded its counter-attack on the establishment with the Constitutional changes on the structure of HSYK and AYM via 2010 referendum. With the changes that were detailed in this chapter, the AKP basically replaced a bureaucratic tutelage with its own control over the judiciary. *Therefore, the systemic changes brought by the Referendum de-securitized the structure of high judiciary for the AKP but re-securitized it for the overall democratic performance of the country.* Because the amendments loaded the government with the capacity to undermine the separation of powers and establish a civilian tutelage through judiciary. All in all, establishing a governmental control over high judiciary, maintaining the tutelary institutions like YÖK despite otherwise claims by Erdoğan, preserving 10% election threshold to enter the Parliament all indicate that the 2010 amendments primarily aimed at consolidating the executive power of government at the expense of judicial freedom and a democratic political space. In other words, the 2010 amendments have transferred the agency of tutelage from the bureaucracy to the executive, that is, from the establishment to the AKP.

### **b. Construction of Threat**

The second term of the AKP did not exhibit any significant threat construction by the AKP. However, the secularist establishment was portrayed as a threat to popular sovereignty in which anti-elite exclusion was heavily used by the AKP leadership. The presumed members of the establishment were also humiliated and undignified publicly through *Ergenekon* and *Balyoz* cases and the debates around them. Large Islamic communities that were previously regarded in the framework of the threat because of religious backwardness (*irtica*), such as; Gülenists and Naqshbandi communities were taken out of that framework, that is to say, de-securitized, in the National Security Policy Document, which is regarded as an autonomous Constitution-like document of security by Turkey's security apparatus. Therefore, being reframed, *irtica* started to be used to frame violent organisations such as Al Qaida and Hezbollah.<sup>590</sup> In addition to that, significant de-securitization took place on the Kurdish issue through recognition of cultural and linguistic rights by the state, yet, as mentioned above, the Opening did not bear the results that it promised. In brief, while securitizing the secularist establishment, the AKP de-securitized the Kurdish issue and

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<sup>590</sup>Aydıntaşbaş Aslı, *Kırmızı Kitap'ta Köklü Değişim*, (Radical Change in the Red Book), Milliyet, 2010, available here: <https://www.milliyet.com.tr/yazarlar/asli-aydintasbas/kirmizi-kitap-ta-koklu-degisim-1256142>, last accessed on 28.07.2020.

Islamic communities. Yet, all these processes of de-securitization of the establishment and re-securitization of Islamic communities would selectively yet fundamentally change in the next terms of the Party.

### **c. Target Groups**

AKP had a multiplicity of target groups in this term. The secularist establishment was declared illegitimate and publicly humiliated through the disclosure of coup plans and following *Ergenekon* and *Balyoz* cases. AKP has been successful in creating democratic credentials out of its fight with the secularist establishment who were portrayed as hindrances to popular will that is represented by the Party. In brief, the establishment was targeted to be dismantled, which was accomplished to a significant extent; that is to say, the secularist establishment was dwarfed if not totally removed. As the establishment is maintained through the staffing of the positions of high bureaucracy with the people of secularist mindset, there is no certain way of knowing whether it was totally removed by AKP's acts of disarticulation.

Gülen Movement constituted the major group that the AKP allied with in dismantling the establishment. As the Gülenists existed in various segments of bureaucracy<sup>591</sup> long before the AKP rule, that is most likely during Özal period (after 1983), the Party did not have the chance to ignore their presence as it lacked loyal cadres of its own. In return for the Gülenist support, the AKP facilitated their staffing in bureaucracy and the two acted in a symbiotic relationship. This symbiosis would also change radically in the next term of the AKP and the fight between the two would shape the whole decade of 2010s.

Kurds are the largest group that the AKP strategically targeted in this term. Coming from the Islamist NOM tradition, the AKP leadership did not possess the exclusionary secular nationalism of the Republic and enjoyed a sizeable electoral support from religiously conservative Kurds. Through de-securitizing the Kurdish issue, the AKP not only aimed at establishing an electoral domination over the Kurds but also depriving the TAF of its pivotal political role as the saviour of the country against Kurdish secessionism.

### **d. Discourse and Orientation**

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<sup>591</sup> The mass purge of Gülenists that Erdoğan conducted in the immediate aftermath of the 2016 coup attempt provides the clearest figures on how many people were allegedly affiliated with the GM in bureaucracy. While roughly 126.000 civil servants were dismissed from their jobs in this process, the alleged Gülenist presence intensified in the fields of education and law enforcement. Details on Gülenist purge are presented in the next Chapter.

AKP's discourse has been less reconciliatory towards the establishment compared to its first term during which the Party had to co-habitate with it. In a similar vein, the Party learned both its own capacity and the capacity of the establishment through the crises at the end of the first term and took a more confident position accordingly. During the *Ergenekon* and *Balyoz* trials, Erdoğan politically aligned himself with the prosecution and did not hesitate to express that publicly. Before any judicial verdict on the nature of *Ergenekon* network, both pro-AKP and Gülenist media outlets started framing it as Ergenekon Terrorist Organisation (ETÖ) signifying how offensive and confident that they had become.

On the Kurdish issue, Erdoğan employed a rather fluctuating discourse. On top of his previous recognition of Kurdish issue as a categorical set of problems in 2005 he declared the Kurdish opening in 2009. In 2011, however, he rejected the framing as Kurdish issue claiming that the issue has been resolved and there were just problems of Kurdish people. In the same year, he reframed the issue as the PKK issue not the Kurdish issue. Framing is important because when the issue is encapsulated as the Kurdish issue, it entails recognition of systemic injustices committed against the collective identity and presence of Kurds. Bracketing it as “problems of Kurdish people”, the issue is rendered as banal and unspecific to any group of people. As the next term of the AKP discloses, Erdoğan's speech and orientation on Kurdish issue reflects a discourse that fluctuates according to the polls and actual election results.



## Chapter 3:

### From Electoral Hegemony to Systemic Domination (2011-2016)

Having increased its vote share in 2011 general elections -for the third time in a general election- to 50% the AKP demonstrated that it has established an electoral hegemony. As Turkey has 10% election threshold<sup>592</sup>, that is to say, the parties that get less than 10% are not represented in the Parliament, the parties that get more than this amount are overrepresented. For instance, when the AKP had first come to power in 2002, it had obtained 66% of the votes with only 34 percent of the vote share. In the Turkish election history the 2002 election is the one with the highest percentage of unrepresented votes (46%). In the 2011 elections 50% of the vote share brought 62% of the seats in the Parliament, which was enough to pass a law and take the issues that require systemic change into referendum. In simple terms, the AKP as the executive had dominated the Parliament as the legislative with this election. So much so that, consecutive election victories and the obtainment of Parliamentary majority in all these elections suggest that “the AKP’s tenure has transformed the Turkish party system into a dominant party system”<sup>593</sup>. As the military wing of the establishment was disarticulated with

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<sup>592</sup>The 10% election threshold was put into practice after the 1980 military coup with a pretext of stability. The real aim of the general staff who conducted the coup was keeping the parties of Islamist NOM tradition, MHP and pro-Kurdish parties out of Parliament.

<sup>593</sup>Çarkoğlu Ali, “Turkey’s 2011 General Elections: Towards a Dominant Party System?”, *Insight Turkey*, vol. 13, no. 3, 2011, pp. 43-62.

the *Ergenekon* and *Balyoz* cases and judicial wing of it was taken over with the changes in the structure of high judiciary through 2010 Referendum, the AKP was not concerned about a systemic intervention either. Thus, the AKP has not only dominated the elections but also established its control over the bureaucracy, with the single exception of the Gülenists with whom the Party was maintaining a symbiotic relationship as of 2011.

In Erdoğan's expressions, the first term in government (2002-2007) was *the period of apprenticeship*, the second (2007-2011) was *foremanship* and the third that started with 2011 elections was *the period of mastery*.<sup>594</sup> Mastery does not only imply experience and know-how but also claims control over the political machinery in the country. In 2013, Istanbul chief of AKP, Aziz Babuşçu, had publicly stated that the AKP had walked together with other groups in the past such as liberals, but "the next period is the period of construction, which will not come about as they would wish. Therefore, these people will ally with the powers that are against us in this period. The Turkey that we will construct will not be a desirable country for them."<sup>595</sup> Babuşçu's expressions clearly indicate that the AKP would change Turkey in the ways that would not be accepted by some of AKP's previous allies. In other words, the Party disposed its former promises to liberals and other pro-democracy groups for a new line of policy, which later turned out to be less-than-democratic in any definition of the word. When Erdoğan's claims of *mastery* for the post-2011 period are put together with Babuşçu's declaration of *construction* it becomes clear that the party had a previously concerted decision for a *more assertive* and *less reconciliatory* policymaking.

After the AKP disarticulated the bureaucratic dominance, it had no other means of external control that would practically limit its policies. Therefore, social reconciliation and political reformism rendered no more existential matters. As indicated by EU Progress Reports and reports of international and national NGOs that are examined in the previous chapter, the reform agenda significantly slowed down before 2007 elections yet continued until 2011 elections, be it with ebb and flow. After 2011, however, "Erdogan was emboldened by the decapitation of the military and imprisonment of other opponents, at the same time that

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<sup>594</sup>Hürriyet, *Başbakan: "2011'de ustalık dönemi başlayacak"*, (PM: TheMastershipWill Start in 2011), Hürriyet, 2011, available here: <https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/basbakan-2011de-ustalik-donemi-baslayacak-17450622>, last accessed on 13.08.2020.

<sup>595</sup>T24, Babuşçu: Gelecek 10 Yıl, Liberaller Gibi Eski Paydaşlarımızın Arzuladığı Gibi Olmayacak, (Babuşçu: Next Decade will not Be Like Our Old Partners Desire", T24, available here: <https://t24.com.tr/haber/babuscu-onumuzdeki-10-yil-liberaller-gibi-eski-paydaslarimizin-kabullenecegi-gibi-olmayacak,226892>, last accessed on 13.08.2020.

he was unrestrained by the now-dim prospect of EU membership. He moved to consolidate his personal power and in the process transform Turkish society.”<sup>596</sup>

As of 2011, AKP had defanged the bureaucratic dominance, sustained insignificant pressure and incentives from the EU and a consolidated voter base in the centre-right on the face of a weak opposition. Therefore, from 2011 onwards, the only agency that the AKP had to convince was its voter base that did not attribute vital importance to democratic reforms. As the political developments that unfolded in this period incrementally demonstrated, all the major elements of AKP rule; *Erdoğan's persona*, *the worldview that the Party represented* and *the electoral base* allowed an authoritarian turn to remain in power if not outright prioritized. In other words, these three elements functioned in harmony to break away from democratic reforms. As the electoral dynamics have become the only means for the full (and unchecked) exercise of power in this period the AKP leadership came to a political understanding that as long as they convinced their supporter base they would remain in the government. Therefore, they were able to re-securitize the issues that pertain to their survival in power when they deemed necessary.

The major events of this period are –chronologically–, the MİT Crisis (February 2012), Gezi Protests (May-August 2013), Closure of College Preparatory Schools (November 2013), 17-25 December Corruption Investigations (2013), local and Presidential elections of 2014 (March and August respectively), and general elections of 2015 (June and November). The June 2015 elections signify a turning point where the AKP has failed to form a government for the first time in its history and then exhibited changes in its policies, which are elaborated in this chapter. Other than the Gezi Protests and the elections, all the major events of this period took place in the context of struggle between the AKP and Gülenists.

### **2.3.1. The National Intelligence (MİT) Crisis: *The First Public Fight with the Gülenists***

The negotiations between high-ranking officials of National Intelligence Agency (MİT) and PKK representatives, which had started in 2009 in the context of Peace Process, was leaked to press in the same year. On February 2 2012, a special court<sup>597</sup> ordered that the

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<sup>596</sup>Cook Steven A., *How Erdogan Made Turkey Authoritarian Again*, The Atlantic, 2016, available here: <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2016/07/how-erdogan-made-turkey-authoritarian-again/492374/>, last accessed on 16.08.2020.

<sup>597</sup>CNNTürk, "Özel Görevli Yargının" *Türkiye Tarihi*, (The History of "Special Courts" in Turkey), 2014, CNNTürk, available here; <https://www.cnnturk.com/turkiye/ozel-gorevli-yarginin-turkiye-tarihi>, last accessed on 18.08.2020. The Special Courts acted in continuum with State Security Courts (DGM), which had been

undersecretary (the Chief) Hakan Fidan and some other officials of MİT summoned for questioning *as suspects* regarding their roles in these talks. The allegations were not clear but as it leaked to press, they involved that the MİT officials were making concessions to PKK on behalf of the AKP government. Erdoğan ordered Fidan not to go for questioning at all costs claiming that the real target behind the summoning order was him.<sup>598</sup>

Later, Erdoğan maintained his grounds on defending Fidan and other MİT officials, and argued that it was him who should have been questioned since he gave the orders to MİT as MİT was accountable to prime ministry.<sup>599</sup> He also argued that the prosecutors and the court were acting as a “state within the state”. Yet, he doesn’t refer to Gülenists as the force behind the court and continues his relations with them in a *controlled tension*. Erdoğan was either not ready to take on the Gülenists or he did not believe the conditions were ripe. Interestingly enough, after MİT crisis Erdoğan defined the authority of Special Courts “excessive”, yet, he had maintained an approving silence when the same courts summoned Chief of General Staff, İlker Başbuğ, for the same purpose. Furthermore, it was Prime Minister Erdoğan who had established the Special Courts in the first place with “excessive” authorities. In brief, *a major tool of securitization* that he had created turned against Erdoğan, and he abolished it questioning its legitimacy through labelling it a state within the state. This indicates that Erdoğan’s decisions on the matters that pertain to securitization were largely shaped by the referent object of securitization policies rather than a systemic improvement.

As the central leadership and provincial organization of the AKP largely came from the political Islamist NOM tradition, to which the GM has always remained distant, there has never been a harmony between the two that was built on an essential overlap. Yet at the backdrop of the secularist bureaucratic domination they acted together in the *Ergenekon* and *Balyoz* cases, yet, the lack of common vision started inserting itself as discord in following the 2011 elections between the two. The discord between the AKP and Gülenists did not start

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established in 1983 to judge the crimes against the Constitutional order and the internal and external security of the state. The AKP shut down the DGMs in 2004 in line with its reformist agenda, yet established Special Courts which functioned under the same legal regulations. As major political cases, such as; Ergenekon, Sledgehammer and KCK trials were handled by these courts, they have proved their utility to the AKP government. However, as they were staffed primarily by the Gülenists, they turned against the AKP with the same (extra) authority that they had. After the MİT crisis, they were swiftly abolished in July 2012 by the AKP government in an effort to defang the Gülenists in judiciary.

<sup>598</sup> Torun Hakime, *Erdoğan: MİT Müsteşarı'na Kesinlikle İfadeye 'Gitmeyeceksin' Dedim*, (Erdoğan: You Will Certainly not Go for Questioning), DHA, 2018, available here: <https://www.dha.com.tr/yurt/erdogan-mit-mustesarina-kesinlikle-ifadeye-gitmeyeceksin-dedim/haber-1559493/video/>, last accessed on 18.08.2020.

<sup>599</sup> A Haber, *Başbakan A Haber'e Konuştu: "Müsteşara Talimatı Ben Verdim, Alacaksınız Beni Alın"*, (PM Speaks to A Haber: Take Me If You Want Since I gave the Order to MİT Undersecretary), YouTube, 2012, available here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qksA8j25R3s>, last accessed on 18.08.2020.

with the MİT crisis but surfaced with it. In any reasonable sense there must be a reason for the Gülenists to strike the AKP government with whom they had been running a symbiotic relationship. Some argue that after disarticulating the secularist establishment, the AKP started to become troubled with the autonomous nature of the Gülenists and see them as another possible tutelary structure resembling the secularist establishment. In other words, the AKP got concerned that the power vacuum that emerged with the neutralization of the establishment in bureaucracy could be filled by Gülenists in a similar fashion. At some point, “the government started having suspicions of Gülenist tutelage and thinking that they were using state apparatuses to further their communitarian agenda. Then the AKP started purging them from key decision making positions within the state”.<sup>600</sup>

The Gülenist side offered a different explanation on the roots of the conflict. Mustafa Yeşil, the president of The Journalists and Writers Foundation, the major public relations organ of the Movement, argued that the cleavage between the GM and the AKP started to emerge in 2010. In this year, Yeşil claims, Prime Minister Erdoğan asked allegiance to his personal rule and the Movement rejected it. Therefore, the autonomy of the Movement was the root cause of the conflict between the two. He also expresses that in response to Erdoğan’s demand for allegiance, the Movement’s representatives said they would support as long as the AKP remained within the boundaries of democracy.<sup>601</sup> These statements are important as they set exception to the GM’s traditional evasive response to their organized presence within bureaucracy. It can be fairly deduced, then, the GM saw Erdoğan’s move against the secularist establishment “within the boundaries of democracy” and supported him through the *Ergenekon* and *Balyoz* cases. Yeşil’s expressions are also important in terms of disclosing the conditionality of their symbiosis with the AKP, which he defines as adherence to democracy and rule of law.

Years later pro-Erdoğan media defined the MİT crisis as the “first attempt of Gülenists to overthrow the AKP government” and the “first link in the chain reaction that ended with July 15, 2016 coup attempt.”<sup>602</sup> The indictment for those who allegedly conducted the attempt

<sup>600</sup> Berkan İsmet, *9 Soruda Cemaat-Hükümet Kavgasının Arkeolojisi ve Geleceği*, (The Archeology and Future of AKP-Gülen Fight in 9 Questions), Hürriyet, 2013, available here: <https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/9-soruda-cemaat-hukümet-kavgasinin-arkeolojisi-ve-gelecegi-25243707>, last accessed on 19.08.2020.

<sup>601</sup> internethaber, *AK Parti ile Cemaat Arasındaki İpleri Koparan Olay!*, (The Event That Severed the Ties Between the AKP and the Gülen Movement!), internetHaber, 2014, available here: <https://www.internethaber.com/ak-parti-ile-cemaat-arasindaki-ipleri-koparan-olay-677821h.htm>, last accessed on 19.08.2020.

<sup>602</sup> Paksoy Murat, *FETÖ'nün Hükümeti Yıkmaya Yönelik İlk Kalkışması: 7 Şubat 2012 MİT Kumpası*, (The First Attempt of FETO to overthrow the Government: The MİT Conspiracy), AA, 2020, available here: <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/turkiye/fetonun-hukumeti-yikmaya-yonelik-ilk-kalkismasi-7-subat-2012-mit-kumpasi/1884609>, last accessed on 18.08.2020.

was completed eight years later, in 2020 in a rather vindictive manner. Interestingly, the official indictment used the same definition with the pro-Erdoğan media; the first coup attempt, for the aborted prosecution of MİT undersecretary, positioned Fethullah Gülen as the chief suspect of the case and demanded aggravated life imprisonment for 34 people who were allegedly involved in the process.<sup>603</sup> As of 2012, the crisis was contained by both sides, yet, the Pandora's Box was opened and from then on, the struggle between the AKP and GM would only deepen and broaden.

### 2.3.2. The Closure of College Preparation Courses: *The AKP Strikes Back*

In Turkey, there is a widespread practice of attending preparatory courses (*dersanes*) for centralized national entrance exams of high schools and universities. For high school entrance, 528.000 out of 1.212.000 (43%) of 8<sup>th</sup> grade students, for university entrance 450.000 out of 739.000 (61%) of 12<sup>th</sup> grade students attended *dersanes* as of 2013<sup>604</sup>, that is when the AKP inserted abolishment of *dersanes*, or rather recrimination of them, into the political agenda of the country. The number of *dersanes* ran by the Gülenists in the same year was 917 out of the total number of 3669<sup>605</sup> amounting up to 25% of the total numbers. *Dersanes* provided a triple layer of utility for the Movement: a) Employment; The Gülenist *dersane* network hired exclusively from Gülenist educators, b) Funding; as private enterprises *dersanes* made profit which was used for the purposes of the GM, c) Recruitment; the Gülenists reached out to upper, middle and lower classes through the *dersane* network. In realization of the strategic value of *dersanes* for the Gülenists, the AKP attacked them with a governmental decision to close all the *dersanes* in the country.

With the closure of *dersanes*, the AKP aimed at cutting an important lifeline of the GM. Ahmet Davutoğlu, the then foreign minister of the AKP government acknowledged the causal relation between the two at a radio program and said: “They might have moved against

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<sup>603</sup>Medyascope, “MİT Krizi” İddianamesi Tamamlandı: “Seçilmiş Hükümeti Yıkma Yönelik İlk Teşebbüs MİT Krizi”, (MİT Crisis Indictment Ready: First Attempt to Overthrow the Elected Government), Medyascope, 2020, available here: <https://medyascope.tv/2020/02/14/mit-krizi-iddianamesi-tamamlandi-secilmis-hukumeti-yikmaya-yonelik-ilk-tesebbus-mit-krizi/>, last accessed on 18.08.2020.

<sup>604</sup>Haberexpress, *Bölge Bölge Dershaneye Giden Öğrenci Sayısı*, (The Number of Students that Attend *Dersanes* on Regional Basis), Haberexpress, 2013, available here: <http://www.haberexpres.com.tr/bolge-bolge-dershaneye-giden-ogrenci-sayisi-18204h.htm>, last accessed on 05.09.2020.

<sup>605</sup>Odatv, *Dershaneler Hakkında Bilmek İstedığınız Her Şey*, (Everything to Know about *Dersanes*), Odatv, 2013, available here: <https://odatv4.com/dershaneler-hakkinda-bilmek-istediginiz-her-sey-1811131200.html>, last accessed on 05.09.2020.

the government because a precious source of (income) them was touched. But remember, the MİT crisis was before that.”<sup>606</sup> Erdoğan disclosed the AKP’s motive in the closure decision in a statement and argued that dersanes were a major income for the Gülenists, thus, they became enemies when dersanes were shut down: “when the (animal) feed was taken away from them, they turned into enemies”<sup>607</sup>. With the wording, *animal feed*, he implies attempts to anchor the debate around the issue of profit and place the Gülenists in a position where they only defend the income that they get from dersanes.

Interestingly, Erdoğan had taken the risk of losing votes that is to say, the closure of *dersanes* would affect people far beyond Gülenists and turn them away from AKP. Furthermore, dersanes have existed in Turkish education environment for a long time in response to demands from the society. They acted as a bridge to good universities and high schools in a country that has standardized central entrance examinations yet lacks a standardized education across the country. Despite the cost of education, they acted as tools of social ladder by enabling less-off students have access to good schools. Rather than going down to the root causes of the existence of dersanes as tools of access and having a system-wide analysis, Erdoğan targeted their very existence and recriminated them. A systemic intervention with possible destructive effects was made with the consideration of weakening the Gülen Movement. As a result, the legislative proposal regarding the closure was passed in the Parliament only to be annulled by the Constitutional Court as it was against the right to free enterprise. Yet the Gülenist dersanes had already been closed down.<sup>608</sup> All in all, the closure of dersanes was AKP’s response to MİT crisis and it took the struggle between the two to a whole new level. As the AKP started going more assertive and interventionist in its fight with the Gülenists, Turkey was shaken by a historic mass riot: the Gezi Protests.

### **2.3.3. The Gezi Protests: *Collective Claustrophobia***

In late May 2013, heavy construction equipment started uprooting trees in Istanbul’s Gezi Park, downtown greenery next to Taksim Square, to build a shopping mall in the form of Ottoman military barracks that used to occupy the area in imperial times. The proposed construction would practically mean privatization of a public square as well. Therefore, the

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<sup>606</sup>Gezegen TV, Ahmet Davutoğlu–Dershanelerin Kapatılması, (Ahmet Davutoğlu-Closure of Dersanes), available here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h1k1hjCfk2o>, last accessed on 06.09.2020.

<sup>607</sup>NTV, Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan’dan Dershane çıkışı, (President’s Remarks on Dersanes), YouTube, available here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2vcXHPiXNJ8>, last accessed on 06.09.2020.

<sup>608</sup>CNNTürk, Anayasa Mahkemesi 'Dershane Kanunu'nu İptal Etti, (Constitutional Court Nullifies the Closure of Dersanes), CNNTürk, 2015, available here: <https://www.cnnturk.com/turkiye/anayasa-mahkemesi-dershane-kanununu-iptal-etti>, last accessed on 06.09.2020.



project would not only deteriorate the quality of life by destroying the greenery but also allocate a public space that is open to everyone to the use of happy few who could live and do shopping in the proposed buildings. The Taksim Solidarity, an umbrella organization that represented 124 NGOs that involved a broad variety of constituents from Chamber of Mechanical Engineers to LGBTI Solidarity Association, called for resistance against the proposed project. Thousands of people responded positively to the call and a peaceful and pacifist sit-in started in Taksim Square around the clock.

On the third day of the sit-in police intervened into protests with disproportional force, burned the tents and used excessive amounts of tear gas. Erdoğan's response was very firm: "Do whatever you want. We have decided for that place and we will carry it out"<sup>609</sup>. This was like a brief summary of Erdoğan's recent policies that ignored the demands of the opposition altogether. The statements triggered much larger participation in the protests in Taksim and mobilized people for the protests in 48 other cities of the country. Rather than de-escalating the tension, Erdoğan named the protestors as "a few looters" and threw gas at fire saying: "Yes we will also build a mosque... People who voted for us have already given permission for this."<sup>610</sup> With an explicitly divisive language, Erdoğan started to give a clear message to the opposition that they (and their demands) were excluded from decision making processes creating a feeling of claustrophobia and suffocation.

Two weeks after the inception of the protests Erdoğan finally agreed to meet with the representatives of protestors, yet no significant consensus was reached. In the midst of debates on the excessive use of force by police, Erdoğan congratulated the police for its performance multiple times. "Excessive physical violence as well as rhetorical brutality defined the government's response to the challenge posed by a defiant, fearless, youthful, good-humoured, wired and cooperative protest movement... In its essence, the Gezi protests were an outburst of anger by citizens against rising authoritarianism, deeper infringement on social and private lives by public authorities..."<sup>611</sup> Towards the end of the protests, Taksim Solidarity published a declaration stating that "it voices a yearning for a greener, more liveable and democratic city and country... Taksim Solidarity's demand for a healthy urbanization and

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<sup>609</sup>Sözcü, *Gezi Parkı olayları neden ve nasıl başladı, neler yaşandı?*, (Why and How Did Gezi Protests Start, What Followed?), Sözcü, 2019, available here: [https://www.sozcu.com.tr/2019/gundem/gezi-parki-olaylari-neden-ve-nasil-basladi-neler-yasandi-2-1247451/1/?\\_szc\\_galeri=1](https://www.sozcu.com.tr/2019/gundem/gezi-parki-olaylari-neden-ve-nasil-basladi-neler-yasandi-2-1247451/1/?_szc_galeri=1), last accessed on 18.09.2020.

<sup>610</sup>Sözcü, *ibid.*

<sup>611</sup> Özel Soli, "A Moment of Elation: The Gezi Protests/Resistance and the Fading of the AKP Project", Özkırımlı Umut (ed.), *The Making of a Protest Movement in Turkey: #occupygezi*, Palgrave Mcmillan, Hampshire, 2014, p. 9.



liveable city merged with the cries of millions for more freedom and democracy reflects a social sensitivity symbolized by Gezi Park”<sup>612</sup>

Gezi was the broadest and most cosmopolitan protest of the country, at least for the last couple of decades in Turkey. It can be compared with the wide protests and political violence of late 1970s in terms of significance, yet Gezi bore important differences. While the 70s protests took place in a milieu of economic and political stability of coalition governments, Gezi erupted against the oppression of a dominant single party government which provided economic stability. A survey conducted among the participants of the Protests exhibits the motives and profiles of protestors: While 14% of the participants joined in reaction to government policies, 8% joined against police brutality, 58% was there as a general reaction to Erdoğan’s discourse and policies, making his leadership and persona major reasons of oppositional mobilization. Just 3.4% claim that the reason of their participation was demolishing of the greenery underlining the initial gathering of the people as a spark. As for electoral orientation, 74% of the protestors voted for the main opposition, CHP and 16% of them voted for pro-Kurdish opposition, BDP<sup>613</sup>. The interesting point here is that despite 90% of the overall protestors were supporting these two parties, the protests were organized or guided by none of them. As the conventional media gave a deaf ear to the protests, the protestors spread the news and calls over social media and very rapidly the protests turned into an *outcry for discontent for Erdoğan leadership*. This suggests that the protestors did not see the opposition parties as major vehicles of political activism and organized on their own. Therefore, “considering the lack of avenues for voice and the lack of obstacles against Erdoğan’s power... combined with his symbolically exclusionary and suffocating speeches, have apparently made a great many non-supporters feel not only completely powerless and frustrated, but also very angry.”<sup>614</sup>

The protests with historic importance, however, were denied screen time and other types of coverage on conventional media which was largely dominated by Erdoğan’s unyielding control. “The domination of major media outlets and the self-censorship in the media allow the government to persuade large segments of the population to take its version

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<sup>612</sup>Taksim Dayanışması, *We are Taksim Solidarity, We are Here!*, Taksimdayanisma.org, 2013, available here: <https://www.taksimdayanisma.org/taksim-dayanismasi-biziz-biz-buradayiz?lang=en>, last accessed on 18.09.2020.

<sup>613</sup>Habertürk, *Gezi Anketinden İlginç Sonuçlar*, (Interesting Results from Gezi Survey), Habertürk.com, 2013, available here: <https://www.haberturk.com/gundem/haber/852023-gezi-anketinden-ilginç-sonuclar>, last accessed on 20.09.2020.

<sup>614</sup>Sözen Yunus, *Confronting an Elected Dictator: Popular Mobilization in Turkey*, International Viewpoint, 2013, vol. 461, p. 4.

of events and its interpretation of these as the final word. In opposition to such overwhelming penetration of the public information space and relentless propaganda, the magic of social media that facilitated information sharing, networking and production of alternative strategies proved insufficient.”<sup>615</sup> As 44% of the AKP voter never used social media in time of the protests, 81% did not receive the news from the internet and watched pro-AKP channels for information as well as entertainment.<sup>616</sup> Erdoğan had insulated his supporters in terms of access to information, and, the internet and social media did not pose a risk regarding their influence on his supporters. Thus, the conservative masses saw the events as a less-than-legitimate rebellion that vandalized public and private property, and regarded it as high treason. Therefore they supported Erdoğan’s oppressive responses to the protests without much hesitation. The reality of the protests remained accessible only to those who used social media without prejudice against protestors.

The 2013 EU Progress Report attributed great importance to Gezi that it rightfully deserved. Underlining the initial non-violent nature of the protests, the Report hails the protests as a sign for the advent of an active and participatory civil society. Yet, it also argues that such a civil society is not regarded as a legitimate shareholder in political processes by the traditional parties. Capitalizing on violations of free speech on media, the Report acknowledges that the mainstream media did not cover the protests through self-censorship and the ones that covered were heavily punished by High Council of Radio and Television (RTÜK)<sup>617</sup>. The HRW 2014 Turkey report also builds on Gezi protests disclosing the crackdown of the police on protestors and failure of the government to protect basic rights and freedoms. HRW also underlines the inconsistent policymaking of Erdoğan leadership drawing the attention to the fact that the same Party that cracked down on the protestors, declared a democratization package that expanded religious freedom through removing the headscarf ban legally and recognized linguistic rights of Kurds better. A fair argument would put forward that they were consistent with AKP’s election calculations that the Party was investing in the elections through de-securitization of the Kurds and conservatives. The protestors of Gezi, on the other hand, were impossible to persuade by the AKP and therefore no investment regarding their demand was necessary. The Committee to Protect Journalists

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<sup>615</sup>Özel Soli (2014), *ibid.*, p. 8-9.

<sup>616</sup>Odatv, *AKP Seçmenini Hiç Kimse Böyle Araştırmadı*, (No One has Studied the AKP Voter as Such), Odatv, 2020, available here: <https://odatv4.com/akp-seçmenini-hic-kimse-boyle-arastirmadi-18051824.html>, last accessed on 01.10.2020.

<sup>617</sup> EU, 2013 Progress Report of Turkey, EU, 2013, available here: [https://www.ab.gov.tr/files/2013%20ilerleme%20raporu/2013\\_ilerleme\\_raporu\\_tr.pdf](https://www.ab.gov.tr/files/2013%20ilerleme%20raporu/2013_ilerleme_raporu_tr.pdf), last accessed on 28.10.2020.

(CPJ) shares statistics in which Turkey was the biggest jailor of journalists second year in a row in 2013 with 40 journalists behind bars and 60 reporters being forced to resign for their coverage of the Protests.<sup>618</sup> Erdoğan's incremental intolerance of criticism and dissidence that started to gain momentum after 2011 elections reached a whole different level during Gezi protests. As he would further go down the authoritarian drift, the intolerance for the outspoken dissidence would also deepen, broaden, and eventually include the last remaining venue for the opposition speech; the social media. On top of the crackdown and intolerance, he would not remain in defensive and launch a discursive counter-attack building upon the perception of victimhood among his supporters.

### **2.3.3.1. Erdoğan's Counter-Discourse: *Competitive Victimhood***

Intergroup Threat Theory provides a coherent perspective and analytical tools that facilitates comprehension of Erdoğan's increasingly authoritarian policies from Gezi onwards. The theory divides the overall threat conception into two major groups; *symbolic threat* and *realistic threat*. Symbolic threat (ST) is perceived as a potential harm by one group on other group's meaning system. The perception involves threats on moral codes, value systems or beliefs of one group by other(s) at varying levels spanning from mere influence to total destruction. Realistic threat (RT) refers to possible harm on physical existence or maintenance of power and resources. As they incite anger, anxiety and hate, both types of threat have destructive effects on intergroup relations that reflect on behaviour patterns of these groups<sup>619</sup>. As group identities get politicized they tend to get more competitive and exclusionary towards others to secure the control of means of symbolic and material dominance.

Utilization of ST and RT were largely determined by the perception of the groups through the lens of *competitive victimhood*. Competitive victimhood is the perception of having suffered more or been exposed to the injustices within the members of a certain groups by the acts of other groups. As people identify themselves with the same victimhood they tend to create solidarity, justify the potential injustices that they inflict on others, deny responsibility, ignore the sufferings of the other parties and create moral high-grounds through all these attitudes.<sup>620</sup> Therefore, competitive victimhood creates grounds and motive

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<sup>618</sup> CPJ, Attack on the Press in Turkey, CPJ, 2013, available here: <https://cpj.org/2014/02/attacks-on-the-press-in-2013-turkey/>, last accessed on 28.10.2020.

<sup>619</sup> Stephan Walter G. et al., "The Intergroup Threat Theory", Nelson D. Todd (ed.), *Handbook of Prejudice Stereotyping and Discrimination*, New York, Psychology Press, 2016, p. 255-273.

<sup>620</sup> Schnabel et al., "When Suffering Begets Suffering: The Psychology of Competitive Victimhood between Adversarial Groups in Violent Conflicts", *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 2012, vol. 16, p. 351-374.

for offensive as well as defensive political mobilization. As groups compete for means of material and ideational control in politics, the perception of victimhood stemming from use of enforcement and violence (including that of state) or any kind of injustice, real or perceived, may be broad. The scope of such a perception could be a driving engine for political mobilization. Therefore, political rivals, in power or opposition, manipulate the perception of victimhood among their audience with claims of restoring justice. From the perspective of this study, it may be used to create grounds for *securitizing* the demands of rival groups, as it has happened during Gezi Protests and afterwards.

Presence of conviction on competitive victimhood increased the perception of both ST and RT among both proponents and opponents of Gezi Protests. However, there was an important difference in prioritization: While the proponents primarily demonstrated the presence of RT, the opponents of Gezi primarily demonstrated the presence of ST. Similarly, the perception of ST created no significant concern on the proponents of the protestors, while it became the major source of concern on the opponents of the protests.<sup>621</sup> Therefore, the proponents of Gezi were concerned about the probability of RT which operates through means of power and violence (including that of state), yet they were more confident in terms of morals, values and belief related issues and did not feel the presence of ST. However, as Erdoğan portrayed the protestors as “looters”, “alcoholics who raided a mosque with beer in their hands”, “collaborators of external enemies”, “attackers of women with headscarf” and his all-times-favourite, “terrorists”<sup>622</sup> the conservative voter perceived a sizeable amount of ST from the protestors. He used moral and identity based exclusion towards the protestors and mobilized his audience agitating their perception of victimhood which at times reached the level of fabrication. For instance, in his criticism of single-party period, which he identified with the protests, Erdoğan claimed that he has studied in very crowded classes during the single party era<sup>623</sup>, yet, he was not even born in that period. In a similar fashion, he claimed in a Parliamentary speech that a woman with headscarf was attacked (because she was wearing

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<sup>621</sup>Demirdağ Ahmet, Hasta Derya, *Gezi Parkı Eylemleri İyi ve Güzel miydi, Kötü ve Çirkin mi? Kime Göre Neye Göre?*, (Were Gezi Protests Good and Positive or Ugly and Negative: For Whom, According to What?), Conference Proceeding, 1st [Turkish] Social Psychology Congress, Başkent University, 2017.

<sup>622</sup>DW, *Erdoğan Eylemcilere Sert Çıktı*, (Erdoğan Lashes Out on the Activists), 2013, DW, available here: <https://www.dw.com/tr/erdo%C4%9Fan-eylemcilere-sert-%C3%A7%C4%B1kt%C4%B1/a-16869254>, last accessed on 06.02.2021.

<sup>623</sup> Cumhuriyet, *1954 doğumlu Erdoğan: Tek Parti Döneminde 75 Kişilik Sınıflarda Okudum*, (Erdoğan, Born in 1954, Claims to Have Studied in 75-people Classes During Single Party Period), Cumhuriyet, 2018, available here: <https://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/haber/1954-dogumlu-erdogan-tek-parti-doneminde-75-kisilik-siniflarda-okudum-991781>, last accessed on 22.09.2020.

headscarf) by protestors and he would share the footage the next Friday<sup>624</sup>. That Friday never came.

Erdoğan was well aware of the fact that the perception of victimhood is a well established sentiment among the conservative masses in Turkey: “Turkish-Islamist intellectuals have constantly promoted the idea that devout Sunni Turks from Anatolia were the real victims of the elitist top-down modernization process and modern state building, imposed on the country by ‘merciless’ secularist elites following the collapse of Ottoman Empire...”<sup>625</sup>This perception turned into support for Erdoğan as he was regarded as the only leader in conservative politics that has the will and capacity to correct that decades-long injustice. Realizing its appeal and mobilization capacity and suitability of his persona, Erdoğan increased his political investment in the perception of victimhood and turned it into a driving engine for his politics. Furthermore, he utilized it as a vehicle of exclusion towards secular groups, Kurds that supported pro-Kurdish parties, Gülenists, nationalists that did not support him and practically everyone who challenged his rule. It also unified the party base through a perception of shared trauma and created a sense of self-tolerance on the face of widespread nepotism and bribery with an understanding of making-up for the times they were victimized.

Under such a political milieu, the uncompromising stance of Erdoğan on behalf of conservatives who share a sense of past victimization and the exclusionary discourse that he employed were appreciated by his voter base. In late June, the surveys indicated that Gezi Protests was the most primary issue on the public agenda and 47% of the voter still supported the AKP<sup>626</sup>. Erdoğan had consolidated his electoral base with the oppressive and exclusionary turn of his policies towards the opposition. The Gezi, then turned into a testing ground for Erdoğan’s new conservatism which can be identified as “assertive conservatism” which is bolder in its anti-secularist claims and oppressive and exclusionary towards dissidence.

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<sup>624</sup> This argument was discussed for a long time in Turkey as Erdoğan failed to provide any supporting evidence despite his promise. The “woman with headscarf” had claimed that about 80 people who wore leather pants and nothing else attacked her and her baby, hit her, harassed her and finally urinated on her. Upon the heavy allegations the police collected the footages from 73 cameras, identified every cell phone holder in the area through triangulation and identified no element of any kind of violence. In the most visible footage, the woman enters the area with the baby cart, meets her husband and crosses the street without any incidence. See the footage at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0MXWRngh6UY>, last accessed on 14.10.2020.

<sup>625</sup>Yılmaz Zafer, “The AKP and the spirit of the ‘new’ Turkey: Imagined Victim, Reactionary Mood, and Resentful Sovereign”, *TurkishStudies*, 2017, vol.8, no. 3, p. 482-513.

<sup>626</sup>Internethaber, *Gezi Olayları Anketleri Şok Etti!*, (Gezi Surveys Shock!), Internethaber.com, available here: <https://www.internethaber.com/gezi-olaylari-anketleri-sok-etti-553834h.htm>, last accessed on 20.09.2020.

### 2.3.3.2. External Enemies and Consortium of Evil

The Hobbesian perspective that “the origin of large and lasting societies lay not in mutual human benevolence but in men’s mutual fear”<sup>627</sup> provides a useful framework to understand Erdoğan’s discourse that started with Gezi protests. The fear, in this perspective has to be in the right amount as too much of it freezes and too little is hardly a call to rally. When the Gezi erupted Erdoğan was exercising an effortless control over police forces and TAF, that is to say major repressive apparatuses of the state. Therefore, Erdoğanhe was too strong for the Gezi protests to pose an existential threat to his government or Turkey. To cultivate the right amount of fear among the conservative electorate, the protests were linked by Erdoğan and his communication machinery to external forces. This linkage also aims at delegitimizing the protests as it implies that the protestors are deliberate collaborators of those forces who seek ways to exercise harm on Turkey. With such a linkage the targeted groups can be blamed over a broad range accusation spanning from ignorance to high treason.

In the presence of such as perception, rallying behind a strong leader like Erdoğan who can secure the values and interests of the nation becomes imperative for conservative and nationalist masses. Messages of such a leader exercise *apull effect* on his audience through *pushing* those who are framed as real or potential threat. The end result of thispull and push deepen the polarizations and loss of social cohesion, which are acceptable costs at the backdrop of benefit of remaining in power for a populist leader likeErdoğan. In full realization of the fact that fear is a primary drive of social and political mobilization<sup>628</sup>, he elevated the threat perception of the protests among his audience by linking them to external forces creating a consortium of evil.

In line with this, AKP’s Communication Directorate created a propaganda video and framed the protests as a “great plot” which targets Turkey’s progress. Rather than displaying AKP’s performance in basic rights and freedoms, the narrative in the video brings large investments and landmark projects to the fore at the backdrop of demands of the protestors. Undermining the fact that the protests were a direct result of AKP’s increasing authoritarianism,the narrative in the video formed around an insidious plot created by “someone” who did not want Turkey’s accomplishments. The “someone” was framed as a less-than-certain foreign power, or multiplicity of them who plotted against Turkey, and the

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<sup>627</sup> Hobbes Thomas, *On the Citizen*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998, p. 24.

<sup>628</sup> Evrigenis D. Ioannis, *Fear of Enemies and Collective Action*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2008, p.5.

protestors of Gezi played into their game, willingly and deliberately<sup>629</sup>. Once such an imaginary enemy is established in the eyes of the supporters, any opposition of the AKP could be juxtaposed with it as domestic collaborator based on the political needs of the Party.

The concept of external enemies was often times portrayed as higher intelligence (mastermind) that plots and acts evil. It is used for two main purposes: The first is about rejecting the responsibility for the things that are not as they should be in the country. The second is to link them with the domestic opposition and declare them as internal enemies in a rather Schmittian way<sup>630</sup>. The ambiguous nature of the mastermind rendered it all the more useful and versatile, therefore, the true identity of them was allegedly known by Erdoğan yet it was never revealed. When asked a question about it, Erdoğan said, “Turkey was targeted from within and without in the last one and a half years. There is a higher intelligence behind them. Of course they asked me who the higher intelligence is. I told them, it is you who should find them.”<sup>631</sup> While the protests were going on he claimed that there was a gang of treason behind the protests and the government would soon disclose who they were with all the relevant documents and evidence.<sup>632</sup> Of course neither any identification was made nor was any evidence presented to the public. Again during the protests, he also claimed that a woman with headscarf was attacked by people and he would share the footage the next Friday<sup>633</sup>.

Since no specific identity was disclosed for the oft cited higher intelligence and external enemies, one can fairly assume that they were fictive characters made for propaganda purposes. The ambiguity in the framing of higher intelligence and external enemies has made it all the more flexible in terms of creating different combinations of evil consortium. In the

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<sup>629</sup> AK Parti Genel Merkez Gençlik Kolları, *Büyük Oyun! Gezi Olaylarının Gerçek Yüzünü Gör Türkiye!*, (The Great Plot: The True Face of Gezi Protests), YouTube, 2013, available here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D0zHnTC6n-Q>, last accessed on 14.10.2020.

<sup>630</sup> Schmitt Carl, *The Concept of The Political*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 2007, p. 46.

<sup>631</sup> Star, Erdoğan: Üst Akıl Kim Diye Soruyorlar (Erdoğan: They Ask Me Who the Higher Intelligence is), Star, 2014, available here: <https://www.star.com.tr/politika/erdogan-ust-akil-kim-diye-soruyorlar-haber-979951/>, last accessed on 14.10.2020.

<sup>632</sup> BBC News, *Erdoğan'dan Gezi Parkı Eylemcilerine Ültimatom*, (Ultimatom to Gezi Protestors from Erdoğan), BBC, 2013, available here: [https://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler/2013/06/130615\\_erdogan\\_miting](https://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler/2013/06/130615_erdogan_miting), last accessed on 14.10.2020.

<sup>633</sup> This argument was discussed for a long time in Turkey as Erdoğan failed to provide any supporting evidence despite his promise. The “woman with headscarf” had claimed that about 80 people who wore leather pants and nothing else attacked her and her baby, hit her, harassed her and finally urinated on her. Upon the heavy allegations the police collected the footages from 73 cameras, identified every cell phone holder in the area through triangulation and identified no element of any kind of violence. In the most visible footage, the woman enters the area with the baby cart, meets her husband and crosses the street without any incidence. See the footage at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0MXWRngh6UY>, last accessed on 14.10.2020.



case of Gezi Erdoğan claimed that it was the “international capital”, “interest lobby”, and “international media” behind the protests. Then again, some other times, it was the “Jewish lobby in the United States”, “George Soros and his extensions in Turkey”, and finally the Gülenists who actually plotted and executed the protests<sup>634</sup>. In this way he could incriminate different actors of the opposition at different times and *securitize* their activities.

#### **2.3.4. Post-Gezi AKP: *Emergence of Assertive Conservatism***

Establishing its electoral domination, disarticulating the establishment, and instituting its own control over high judiciary, the AKP had no systemic barriers to exercise what it saw fit. In other words, the Party had taken over the major powerhouses (other than the Gülenists, yet) in electoral and bureaucratic terms. After this point the AKP leadership was convinced that they needed no more reconciliatory policies towards different segments of society as the persuasion of conservative voter was enough to remain in power. From 2011 onwards, the AKP started exercising more assertive policies. These policies were not based on a well defined ideological matrix, yet, they were informed by the new conservatism framed by Erdoğan leadership. This new conservatism, as was discussed previously in the formative years of the Party, incorporated some content from Islamism, and therefore, it was situated further in the right side of the political spectrum in terms of socio-cultural imagination. It involved a desire to reshape the society through exercising conservative restrictions over it. When the ban on the alcohol sale was being discussed between the hours 22.00 and 06.00, Erdoğan framed the issue on the secular-religious fault line with a deliberate aim at tension and responded to criticism in a very divisive manner: “Would you just stand against something just because religion commands you to do it? You uphold a law that was made by two drunkards, yet why do you have to reject something that is commanded by faith?”<sup>635</sup> In this statement he violates the Constitutional law that no legislation can be based on religion and implicitly insults the founding father of the Republic, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and his

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<sup>634</sup> BBC, *Erdoğan'ın Gezi Konuşması*, (Erdoğan's Gezi Address), BBC, 2013, available at: [https://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler/2013/06/130611\\_erdogan\\_gezi\\_konusmasi](https://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler/2013/06/130611_erdogan_gezi_konusmasi), last accessed on 14.10.2020.

<sup>635</sup> Get the News, *Başbakan Erdoğan "İki tane ayyaşın yaptığı yasa sizin için muteber oluyor da"*, (“PM Erdoğan: You Uphold a Law Made by two Drunkards”), YouTube, 2013, available here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IEIaUm4S4w0>, last accessed on 23.09.2020.



right hand, İsmet İnönü. Calling Atatürk a “drunkard” signifies that Erdoğan had gained enough confidence to abandon reconciliatory policies with the major settings of the Republic.

The interference of the AKP to the lifestyle was not limited to alcohol sale as Erdoğan leadership was determined to life difficult for secular people. While the aforementioned discussion was going on, the “morning after pill” that prevents pregnancy was made a prescription drug making it more difficult for women (and for men) to make decisions about their lives. In November 2013, a couple months after Gezi Protests, he placed another polarizing issue on the public debate by shaming the male and female university students who stay in same houses and declared that the authorities would do what was necessary to prevent that. This debate was specifically important as it indicated that Erdoğan’s interventionism would attempt to reach into the private realm.<sup>636</sup> All in all, with the prohibitions that it offered and the legislations that it made, the AKP started a period of re-securitization through policies of assertive conservatism.

Gezi Protests reminded Erdoğan that he had reached the boundaries of the political power that he could harness through reformist and reconciliatory politics. While he erected himself as the established leader of the conservative voter, he also created a dissidence that amounted up to half of the population. This is why he did not hesitate to pit his supporters contra protestors and said: “There is more than 50% (of the population) that I am having hard time keeping at home”.<sup>637</sup> He was pressing on the nerves of the conservatives to rally them around him and placing a wedge between them and the rest of the society.

In electoral terms, consolidation of the conservative voter was enough to remain in power. As he did not have any feasible competitor in conservative politics, it made sense for him to broaden and deepen the already existing fault line between the secular and conservative politics. The first real-life practice of this new exclusionary and assertive conservatism came in with Erdoğan’s management of the Gezi protests after which he consolidated his grip on conservative voter. Another realization for the AKP, perhaps, was the enforcement capacity of Turkish Republic that had the ability to suppress broad street mobilization. All in all, during Gezi protests Erdoğan realized the compatibility of Turkish

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<sup>636</sup>Yükselir Sevilay, *Türkiye 'Kızlı Erkekli' Öğrenci Evlerini Tartışıyor*, (Turkey Discusses Mixed Gender Student Houses), Milliyet, 2013, available here: <https://www.milliyet.com.tr/gundem/turkiye-kizli-erkekli-ogrenci-evlerini-tartisiyor-1788449>, last accessed on 23.09.2020.

<sup>637</sup>Post Medya, *Başbakan Erdoğan Basın Toplantısında Gazeteci Birsen Altaylı ile Tartıştı*, (PM Argues with Journalist Birsen Altaylı), YouTube, 2013, available here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JgQti7AGzGg>, last accessed on 18.09.2020.

conservatism with authoritarian policies when presented in the right discourse and the enforcement capacity of the state. This realization, then, facilitated his resort to more authoritarian policies and polarizing discourses which together constitute Erdoğan's assertive conservatism.

#### **2.3.4.1. Discursive and Political Pillars of Assertive Conservatism: *The “Native and National” and “New Turkey”***

Unification of the conservative voter through authoritarian practices and exclusionary discourse towards the rest of the society was becoming the defining characteristic of AKP's main policy line in post-Gezi period. Erdoğan has been successful in getting the conservative voter around his persona in a sustainable manner but they lacked an umbrella identity that covers their internal diversity. In a couple years the AKP leadership found an expression for its followers through the initiation of a new concept: “native and national”. For the proponents of the Party the concept was used to create a new *togetherness* that would act as a socio-political underpinning for the new Presidential regime. It would theoretically include everyone that prioritizes Turkey's national interests.<sup>638</sup> Two points of criticism come to the fore about this framing: First, anything that would include everyone, even in theory, cannot be a matter of political debate; therefore it is inevitably a *free floating identifier*. Second, political actors take different positions through different definitions of national interests. Thus, by its very nature, national interest is a contested concept. The “native and national”, then, reflects a monist political mindset that offers two things to the outsider; assimilate or remain invisible. With this rather hegemonic framing, AKP declares monopoly on the determination of what is national and where its interests lie.

The “native and national” is AKP's effort to re-define the centre of the country in a holistic approach that would involve social, political, economic and cultural dimensions. With this, AKP explicitly aims at empowering the conservative masses that were previously regarded as the periphery of the society and mobilize them towards centre. From the proponents' perspective, this mobilization renders the centre egalitarian and diverse. Yet, it also implies a takeover of the centre from Westernist and privileged elite. The proponents framed the control of the centre by conservative masses as a leap forward in democratization in a majoritarian sense. While the democratic credentials of the AKP were shaped by its

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<sup>638</sup>Duran Burhanettin, *Milli ve Yerli Söyleminin İçini Kim Dolduracak?*, (Who will Provide the Content for Native and National?), Sabah, 2017, available here: <https://www.sabah.com.tr/yazarlar/duran/2017/09/09/milli-ve-yerli-soyleminin-icini-kim-dolduracak>, last accessed on 30.09.2020.

struggle with the tutelary secularist establishment in its reformist years, they would be shaped by majoritarian conservatism in its authoritarian turn.<sup>639</sup>

Expressing the new conservatism of the AKP, the concept of “native and national” vaguely frames the new identity of the ideal citizen by anchoring it around conservatism. Thus it comes as a vehicle of exclusion for the voice of the opposition. This rather hegemonic perspective serves the interests of the AKP through; a) concealing the fact that democracy builds not only on separation of power but also distribution of it, b) reducing democratic rule into majoritarianism, c) legitimacy and naturalization of its rule as the representative of the majority.<sup>640</sup> As Erdoğan is the ultimate manifestation of the will of native and national, any dissidence to his rule can be discarded or incriminated through being positioned against the will of local and national.

This new framework of ideal citizen bears practical merits that serve the purposes of the Party. First of all, it is flexible and grants Erdoğan the power to redefine it in selectively inclusive ways. A Kurd, for example can be defined as native and national as long as she supports the AKP and otherwise when she supports pro-Kurdish parties. Second, it facilitates *interdiscursivity* between conservative and nationalist groups and helps unify them under Erdoğan’s leadership. In other words, it amalgamates AKP’s former conservatism that partly excluded nationalism with the latter and materializes the new and assertive conservatism of the country which is heavily informed by nationalism. Third, it has a connotation of primordialism favouring the conservative groups over the secularist ones by the assumed virtue of representing the traditional values of Turkey. In connection with that, this primordialism implies reclaiming the long denied rights of the conservative masses. In this regard it is a proper expression of AKP’s identity, in its authoritarian turn. Like every identity formation, the “native and national” opens a parenthesis, fills it with the content of utility for power and closes it denying general access. The AKP therefore, excludes others from means of power and resources in an agonistic practice rather than seeking a consensus through liberal public debate. It also securitizes the very existence of other identities and their interests through as they are not properly native and national, reminding the suitability and relevance of the theoretical framework chosen for this study.

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<sup>639</sup>Aslan Ali, *Yeni Referans Noktası: Yerli ve Milli Siyaset*, (The New Anchor: Native and National Politics), SETA, 2017, available here: <https://www.setav.org/ yeni-referans-noktasi-yerli-ve-milli-siyaset/>, last accessed on 30.09.2020.

<sup>640</sup>Çınar Menderes, *Yerli ve Milli Sığınağı*, (The Refuge of Native and National), Birikim, 2019, available here: <https://www.birikimdergisi.com/haftalik/9866/yerli-ve-milli-sig-inagi>, last accessed on 30.09.2020.

The concept of New Turkey (NT) was the second and regime-related pillar of AKP's assertive conservatism. The "newness" in its framing suggests upgrade and improvement without changing the essence of what Turkey is. If "native and national" is considered the socio-political identity of AKP dominated Turkey, the NT stands as its state identity. In a double helix, they represent a comprehensive effort of transformation. However, just like the "conservative democracy" of 2004, the NT has never been clarified in a well defined manner. In a rather ambiguous fashion, the concept enables AKP leadership to express its revisionism as it pleases and gives it a discursive boost.

In his official declaration of the concept, Erdoğan used "Vision Statement for New Turkey" interchangeably with "Presidential Turkey Vision Statement" in 2014. Therefore, it would only be fair to argue that the primary aim with NT was the transition into presidential regime. In the statement the NT is framed as; "a geography where the nation is in peace with the state. We are building a Turkey that is not distant to its own culture, language and geography but is proud of them...The New Turkey is built upon social welfare, great economy, political stability and advanced democracy...The New Turkey will be an attraction point in finance, health, education and culture."<sup>641</sup> In the rest of the statement while the issues pertaining to human rights were dwarfed, collective developmentalism was promoted in terms of material prosperity indicating a well thought out prioritization for conservative voter. As disclosed in the vision statement, the concept of NT is full of discursive promises without much specification that suits the needs of AKP's leader-driven politics. Another advantage for the vague nature of the concept is that it could be re-shaped and re-positioned when necessary. On a national day, May 19 that celebrates the commencement of War of Independence by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, Erdoğan stated that "the spirit that constitutes the iron core of New Turkey is the spirit of May 19, it is the spirit of united fight against difficulties."<sup>642</sup> Framing the NT through May 19, which is celebrated by the secular and nationalist groups as the roots of Turkey, Erdoğan expresses a desire for reconciliation with the establishment.

Defying a consistent definition, the NT utilizes an amalgamation of Islam and Turkish nationalism. In NT, "The control over religion is not being executed with a restrictive *laik*

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<sup>641</sup>AA, *Yeni Türkiye Yolunda* " Vizyon Belgesi, (Vision Statement on the Way to New Turkey), 2014, available at: <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/politika/yeni-turkiye-yolunda-vizyon-belgesi/142296#>, last accessed on 05.10.2020.

<sup>642</sup>Milliyet, Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan Çözümü Buldu, (President Erdoğan Finds the Solution), 2015, available here: <https://www.milliyet.com.tr/siyaset/cumhurbaşkanı-erdogan-cozumu-buldu-2061404>, last accessed on 05.10.2020.

mind-set, as throughout Republican history, but with a mind-set that puts Islam in the forefront – yet without relinquishing control.”<sup>643</sup> However, the NT was far from an Islamist framework as Erdoğan was well aware of the fact that he would not be able to maintain his conservative voter base without nationalistic sentiments. Therefore, he amalgamated Islamic sensitivities with Turkish nationalism and created a significant amount of discretion for himself regarding the positioning of *centre of gravity* for the discourse that he used. In fact, the NT represents the re-orientation of Erdoğan’s overall policies in a more nationalistic position. In 2015, he defined the NT, as the “red apple” (*kızılelma*) of his political struggle<sup>644</sup>. Red Apple is a nationalistic political symbol that represents ultimate target of Turkish accomplishments in a primordial sense. Erdoğan’s embrace of it as the ultimate goal for his political career, which he started as an outright political Islamist and moved on as a conservative reformist, represents an important re-orientation. This re-orientation would later intensify and materialize in an alliance with the Nationalist Movement Party.

Yet, the NT was still too vague to create political mobilization and upon this realization, the AKP leadership prepared a “New Turkey Contract”. Before exploring into the content and framework of this contract, it is important to underline the fact that this “contract” was singlehandedly prepared by the AKP disregarding all other socio-political and economic actors. Therefore, it doesn’t involve other actors and is not based on any reconciliation or an agreed upon consensus. This naming however, successfully discloses AKP’s policies of this period in a nutshell: *a pragmatic domination with discursive shields*. The “contract” connects the NT to past Turkish states like Ottoman and Seljuk empires and lays the grounds on the teachings of Sheikh Edebali, the mentor of the first Ottoman sultan that embodies in the motto; “let humans live so that the state lives”. Throughout the discursive text of the contract, there is a visible effort of redefining the state and society on a Muslim-Turkish basis through justifying them with modern concepts, such as; human dignity, equality, liberty and justice.<sup>645</sup> All in all, the text represents an effort of crafting a modern discourse for the identity of state and society out of conservative-nationalist values.

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<sup>643</sup>Öztürk A. Erdi, “An alternative reading of religion and authoritarianism: the new logic between religion and state in the AKP’s New Turkey”, *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, 2019, vol.19, no.1, p. 79-98.

<sup>644</sup>Presidency of Republic of Turkey, *Yeni Türkiye Mücadelemiz, Bizim Kızıl Elmamızdır*, (New Turkey Our Red Apple), Official Website of Presidency, 2015, available here: <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/haberler/410/30102/yeni-turkiye-mucadelemiz-bizim-kizil-elmamizdir#>, last accessed on 05.10.2020.

<sup>645</sup>Davutoğlu Ahmet, *Yeni Türkiye Sözleşmesi*, (The New Turkey Contract), Ak Parti Official Website, last accessed on 07.10.2020.

The Foundation for Political, Economic and Social Research (SETA), which is tasked with offering conceptual justification for AKP's policies as a pro-government think-tank that is funded by the family of Erdoğan's son in law, Berat Albayrak<sup>646</sup> created a conceptual map for the NT. The map places the NT in a post-Kemalist context via a *fait accompli* rupture through framing Kemalism as the "Old Turkey" and define it basically as "something else".<sup>647</sup> Behind the discursive shield of the NT Erdoğan often times expressed his desire for transition into presidential system: "We need a system that would enable Turkey to move faster and this is presidential system...The existing system is an incorrigible patchwork...Give me 400 parliamentarians and I will establish the New Turkey"<sup>648</sup>

All in all, the concept is devoid of content and is utilized as a vague and flexible framework to justify and glorify the discourses and policies of the AKP. With "New Turkey", the "local and national" would be brought to the socio-political centre as "the rightful owners". Thus, the "local and national" as the socio-political framing and the "New Turkey" as the its regime, the two concepts constitute the double helix of AKP's assertive conservatism under which many violations of human rights would be committed.<sup>649</sup>

### **2.3.5. Gülenists Strike Back: *The Corruption Investigations***

The tension of Gezi protests was just over that the AKP government was shaken at its roots by a corruption investigation. On December 17, 2013, police raided the homes of many people who were in close business circles of the AKP, including the sons of three cabinet members. Prosecution accused the sons of cabinet members, some business people and the chairman of a state-run bank, Halkbank, with corruption, fraud and gold smuggling. At the centre stage of the alleged web of corruption was Reza Zarrab, an Iranian businessman who were involved in a money laundering setup to bypass the sanctions imposed on Iran by the United States.<sup>650</sup> A second wave of investigations was launched 8 days after the first one, on

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<sup>646</sup>DW, *Alman Hükümeti SETA'nın Mali Kaynağını Açıkladı*, (German Government Discloses SETA's Financial Source), 2019, available here: <https://www.dw.com/tr/alman-h%C3%BCK%C3%BCmeti-setan%C4%B1n-mali-kayna%C4%9F%C4%B1n%C4%B1-a%C3%A7%C4%B1klad%C4%B1/a-51233211>, last accessed on 09.10.2020.

<sup>647</sup>Yaslıçimen Faruk, "Yeni Türkiye"nin Kavram Haritası, (Conceptual Map of New Turkey), *SETA Perspektif*, 2014, vol. 74.

<sup>648</sup>Milliyet, *Erdoğan: '400'ü Verin Kuralım'*, (Erdoğan: Give Me 400 Deputies and I will Establish It), Milliyet, 2015, available here: <https://www.milliyet.com.tr/siyaset/erdogan-400u-verin-kuralim-2016840>, last accessed on 09.10.2020.

<sup>649</sup>Göksel Oğuzhan, "Uneven Development and Non-Western Modernities: A Historical Sociology Guide to the New Turkey", *New Middle Eastern Studies*, 2018, vol. 8, no.1, p. 63-89.

<sup>650</sup>Orucoglu Berivan, *Why Turkey's Mother of All Corruption Scandals Refuses to Go Away*, Foreign Policy, 2015, available here: <https://foreignpolicy.com/2015/01/06/why-turkeys-mother-of-all-corruption-scandals-refuses-to-go-away/>, last accessed on 09.10.2020.



December 25, yet they were not undertaken by the police who had been assigned into their positions days before the launch. The second wave included Erdoğan's son, Bilal Erdoğan in the alleged scheme of bribery and other illegal financial affairs.

All four ministers, whose family members were involved in the probe; MuammerGüler, Minister of internal affairs, Zafer Çağlayan, Minister of economy, ErdoğanBayraktar, Minister of Environment and Urbanization and EgemenBağış, Minister of EU Affairs, had to resign due to public indignation. With this Erdoğan gave a message to his supporter base that he or his family were not involved in the corruption scheme and his Party was strong enough to clear out from those who were corrupted. Then he cracked down on the high level members of law enforcement: In two days, Erdoğan removed the police chief of Istanbul and 5 directors including the ones in charge of organized crime, financial crimes and terrorism. In the following days the purge was extended to other cities, perhaps with the idea of pre-emptive strike, and thousands of members of law enforcement were reassigned. Arrest warrants were issued for the police officers who conducted the investigations and by replacing them with hisloyals, Erdoğan practically equipped himself with impunity against any other possible investigations. The 2014 Turkey Progress Report of the EU frames Erdoğan's dismissal of the prosecution team and the massive purge in law enforcement as "intervention into independence and efficiency of judiciary" and draws the attention on further politicization of public administration. The Report also highlights the fact that the way the AKP government handled the corruption investigations created significant concern in terms of transparency, equality before the law and cumulatively, the separation of powers.<sup>651</sup>

Interestingly, Erdoğan has never denied the corruption of the accused people and did not hesitate approving their resignation implicitly clarifying himself and his family members. Instead of focusing on the content of the accusations, he diverted the public attention to the "motive of the prosecution" and established his line of defence there. Framing the investigations as *judicial coup attempt* Erdoğan argued that, "They acted in an organizational hierarchy and attempted for a judicial coup. They tried to take the sovereignty from the nation and give it to judiciary. This is what we saw and fought against."<sup>652</sup> This was not only an attempt to de-legitimize but also position them contra public will. In another speech, he said;

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<sup>651</sup> See the pages 10-14 of 2014 Turkey Progress Report of EU here: [https://www.ab.gov.tr/files/ilerlemeRaporlariTR/2014\\_ilerleme\\_raporu\\_tr.pdf](https://www.ab.gov.tr/files/ilerlemeRaporlariTR/2014_ilerleme_raporu_tr.pdf), last accessed 29.10.2020..

<sup>652</sup>YeniAsya, *Başbakan Erdoğan: Yargı Darbesi Yapılmak İstendi*, (A Judicial Coup was Attempted), YeniAsya, 2014, available here: [https://www.yeniasya.com.tr/gundem/basbakan-r-tayyip-erdogan-yargi-darbesi-yapilmak-istendi\\_167843](https://www.yeniasya.com.tr/gundem/basbakan-r-tayyip-erdogan-yargi-darbesi-yapilmak-istendi_167843), last accessed on 10.10.2020.

“The target is not the AKP or the government, the target with this operation is Turkey... The investigation is supported from within and without the country... We are not fighting with judiciary itself, we are fighting with an illegal organization in judiciary and law enforcement...”<sup>653</sup> With the claim that the investigation targeted Turkey, Erdoğan discursively positioned everyone at the target board regardless of their political orientation and delegitimized the investigation on this basis, once again.

Erdoğan accused the GM for the “judicial coup attempt” and upon surviving the investigations he framed the GM as illegal and came up with a naming; the “Parallel State” referring to the heavy staffing and autonomous acts of the Movement within the bureaucracy. In the aftermath of the investigations, the all-out-war between the AKP and Gülenists accelerated and Erdoğan’s accusations on the GM reached the level of explicit hate speech. In different times, he named the Gülenists as; *assassins* (referring to the committed assassins of Hassan Sabbah), *infidels*, *psychos*, *grave diggers*, *instigators*, *a treasonous terrorist organization*, *immoral herd*, *slanderers*, *con artists*, *vampires feed on blood*, *blood lobby*, *an apparatus of Turkey’s enemies*, *blackmail artists*, *leeches that suck blood*, and *false prophet* (referring to Gülen’s persona). He then added, “we will raid your caves and call it a witch hunt if you will, we will do this witch hunt”<sup>654</sup>.

Erdoğan was aware of the fact that the GM was weak in making friends, and they had further isolated themselves from the political opposition groups in their support for the AKP. The secular groups were disturbed by both the religious nature of the Movement and its increasing influence within the state apparatuses. The conservative groups, such as Islamic communities and *tarikats* saw the GM as a dominant player that is too Westernist and too big leaving a limited space for them to operate and thrive. Furthermore, as explained in the previous chapter, the Gülenists had serious deficits in communication with broader society and public relations, contributing to their isolation from the rest of the society. Eventually, the Movement found itself all alone against Erdoğan’s AKP, especially after it became clear that the winner of the struggle would be Erdoğan, yet, “...he paid an enormous price for it as the reality of his government’s and party’s corruption became common knowledge.”<sup>655</sup> In 2014,

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<sup>653</sup> BBC News, *Erdoğan: 17 Aralık Darbe Girişimidir*, (Erdoğan: December 17 is a Coup Attempt), 2014, available here: [https://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler/2014/01/140115\\_erdogan\\_darbe](https://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler/2014/01/140115_erdogan_darbe), last accessed on 11.10.2020.

<sup>654</sup> Son Vesayet, *Erdoğan’ın Tüm Hakaretleri*, (All the Insults of Erdoğan), YouTube, 2014, available here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hHBUK5ssv28>, last accessed on 16.10.2020.

<sup>655</sup> Edelman E. et al., *Turkey Transformed: The Origins and Evolution of Authoritarianism and Islamization Under the AKP*, Washington DC, Bipartisan Policy Center, 2015, p. 52.



Turkey dropped 11 ranks in the Corruption Perception Index of Transparency International and took 64<sup>th</sup> place<sup>656</sup>.

Erdoğan's *naming* was responded with an effort of *shaming* by the GM. As their cadres were removed from their posts, the Gülenists resorted to share the phone recordings they obtained during the investigation with the press. IN one of those recordings Erdoğan calls his son, Bilal, informs him about the raids conducted on December 17 and tells him to take all the cash out of home.<sup>657</sup> Dismissing the recordings as montage and fake voiceover, he started a massive campaign of securitization which commenced with the closure of YouTube and Twitter and moved on with the raids on the media outlets of the GM; Zaman Daily and Samanyolu Television Group arresting 24 journalists. He spread his version of the narrative through the media that he largely controlled and lashing out on the criticism coming from EU, he told Brussels to mind its own business.<sup>658</sup> EU's High Representative for Foreign Affairs, Federica Mogherini and Enlargement Commissioner, Johannes Hahn said any move towards membership depended on "full respect for the rule of law and fundamental rights" and the raids on the media outlets of the GM and arrests of journalists "are incompatible with the freedom of media, which is a core principle of democracy", the pair said in a statement"... Yet, when he was asked to comment on EU's criticism, Erdoğan said, "We have no concern about what the EU might say, whether the EU accepts us as members or not."<sup>659</sup> Excluding Brussels from the domestic affairs of Turkey and publicly stating disregard discloses that Erdoğan had given up on EU access reforms altogether. In this new regime where he could go authoritarian as he needed, Erdoğan knew very well that he had no place in the EU. Once EU's endless emphasis on rule of law and democratic rights were considered, Erdoğan would have no desire for EU membership either.

At the backdrop of these developments, the chairman of main opposition CHP; Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu described the investigations as the largest corruption investigations of Republican history and dismissing the naming "parallel state" he claimed that the investigations were conducted by the "conscience of the state".<sup>660</sup> Devlet Bahçeli, the chairman of the MHP made a gesture with a symbolic value and stopped the watch in his room claiming

<sup>656</sup>See the 2013 report of Transparency International here:

<https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2013/results/tur>, last accessed on 28.10.2020.

<sup>657</sup>CHP2014, *Tayyip Erdoğan and Bilal Erdoğan Talk on the Phone*, 2014, available here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aeytLBm62eo>, last accessed on 07.02.2021.

<sup>658</sup>BBC, *Turkey's Erdogan Battles 'Parallel State'*, BBC, 2014, available here: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-30492348>, last accessed on 13.10.2020.

<sup>659</sup>BBC, *Turkey Media Arrests: Erdogan Rejects EU Criticism*, BBC, 2014, available here: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-30484729>, last accessed on 13.10.2020.

that he would never back down from his efforts to keep the perpetrators accountable. Interestingly, the opposition parties used the opportunity space created by the GM taking a huge risk, yet they have never acknowledged any sympathies with the Movement. Such was the level of isolation that the GM was going through. All in all, the opposition rendered unsuccessful in terms of keeping the AKP accountable and Erdoğan survived the largest corruption investigations of Turkish history drifting further down the authoritarian path.

### **2.3.6. Multiple Elections: *Victory, Loss and Embrace of Nationalism***

#### **2.3.6.1. Local and Presidential Elections of 2014: *The Victory***

2014 local elections were a test for Erdoğan and his Party after a year fluctuated by Gezi protests and the Corruption investigations. Despite Erdoğan's firm dismissal of corruption investigations the image of the Party was somewhat damaged, yet with a successful election campaign that brought Erdoğan further to the fore rather than mayoral candidates the Party won 43% with an increase of 5% since the last local elections. The concept of "National Will", which embodied in Erdoğan's persona, was central to the campaign. AKP's discourse was centred on Erdoğan being the best political actor to represent the national will with all his political appeal and leading skills.<sup>661</sup> The central theme, national will, seems to have been specifically selected to appeal to conservative-nationalist voter without explicitly and ideologically being nationalistic. AKP's pragmatism would actually allow ideological nationalism to some extent and it would appeal to the electoral base of Nationalist Movement Party, yet, it would come with the cost of losing Kurdish votes. So there has been delicate election arithmetic for the AKP that it had to appeal to both nationalistic and Kurdish voter at the same time. Erdoğan's persona was the melting point of the two, yet, soon he would have to make a choice on this delicate balance.

The increase in the votes of the AKP indicated that the party basis was not shaken by the corruption investigations. They either did not believe in the allegations of the corruption and dismissed them despite the resignations of the ministers from the cabinet or did not attribute significance to the corruption at the backdrop of their persuasion on AKP's economic success. Regarding the fight with the GM, they preferred Erdoğan whom they can keep

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<sup>660</sup>T24, '17 Aralık Operasyonunu Paralel Yapı Değil Devletin Vicdanı Yaptı', (Not the Parallel State but the Conscience of State Conducted the December 17 Investigations), 2014, T24, available here: <https://t24.com.tr/haber/17-aralik-operasyonunu-paralel-yapi-degil-devletin-vicdani-yapti.253486>, last accessed on 13.10.2020.

<sup>661</sup>Göksu Oğuz, "2014 Yerel Seçimlerinde Siyasal İletişim ve Yeni Medya", Özkan A. et al. (eds), *Yeni Medya ve Reklam*, Der'in Publications, Istanbul, 2015, p. 313-342.

accountable to some extent over FethullahGülen who is neither in a public office nor publicly accountable.

As the presidential term for Abdullah Gül ended August 2014, presidential elections were held. For the first time in Republican history, the president was to be elected by popular vote as stipulated by 2007 referendum. Winning the election with 52%, Erdoğan, once again identified himself as the materialization of the popular will and said: “It is not only Recep Tayyip Erdoğan won the elections today. National will, once again, won the election.”<sup>662</sup> In his victory speech Erdoğan declared that he would be a “running and sweating president” referring to the executive role that he wanted to play as the president. In this election, SelahattinDemirtaş, the candidate of pro-Kurdish HDP won 10% and established his leadership within the Party and beyond, and declared the vision of his party as “becoming a mass party”. Ekmeleddinİhsanoğlu, the meek conservative figure who was nominated by CHP and MHP to persuade the conservative voter obtained 38% and left the political arena. All in all, the AKP came out of the elections of 2014 victorious and consolidated its power both in the central and local terms. Erdoğan leadership had dressed its wounds after a shaky year.

### **2.3.6.2. 2015 Elections: *The Loss and Further Securitization***

The AKP entered the general elections of June 2015 under the leadership of Ahmet Davutoğlu who was placed in the position of chairman by Erdoğan upon becoming the President who could not officially be affiliated to a political party by the Constitution. The vote share of the party was reduced to 41% from the 50% of the last general elections that were held in 2011<sup>663</sup>. The Party had lost 69 seats in the Parliament, alongside its ability to form a single party government, that is, for the first time since its foundation. Despite being the most popular party, the AKP had lost its exceptional status as a party that had always been strong enough to form a government as it pleased. Both nationalist MHP and pro-Kurdish HDP increased their votes since 2011, indicating the failure of the “politics of balance” that the AKP has been conducting between the Kurdish voter and Turkish nationalism. AKP realized that it was losing on both ends of its voter spectrum; therefore it had to present a more clear and specific stance. The only significant competitor to the AKP regarding the Kurdish vote was the HDP in the pre-dominantly Kurdish Southeastern Turkey, and the

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<sup>662</sup>BBC News, *Türkiye'nin 12. Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan*, (Erdoğan Becomes the 12th President of Turkey), BBC, 2014, available here: [https://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler/2014/08/140810\\_cumhurbaskanligi\\_secim](https://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler/2014/08/140810_cumhurbaskanligi_secim), last accessed on 19.10.2020.

<sup>663</sup>See 2015 Election Results here: <https://www.haberturk.com/secim/secim2015/genel-secim>, last accessed on 22.10.2020.

Kurdish voter had chosen the HDP over the AKP with over 80% of votes in many provinces of the region. MHP declared that it would not be involved in any coalition formation and practically forced the AKP into repeat elections as the Party could not form a coalition with CHP as its arch rival and HDP whom the AKP regarded less-than-legitimate.

The Kurds were frustrated with AKP's Kurdish opening and there was a substantial reason for that. In September 2014 the militants of ISIS had violently besieged a Kurdish majority Syrian city, Kobane, and perceiving a strong and organized Kurdish presence in Northern Syria a threat to Turkey's national security, Erdoğan had mentioned the siege in a celebratory tone. Erdoğan's attitude and government's inaction regarding the siege of Kobane triggered Kurdish urban riots which spread to 35 cities including Istanbul and Ankara and claimed the lives of 30 people.<sup>664</sup> Erdoğan perceived this as a Kurdish street mobilization against his leadership and eventually positioned in a more security oriented approach on the Kurdish Issue gradually giving up on the Kurdish Opening.

Yet, in February 2015, a few months before the general elections in June of the same year, a significant step was taken by the AKP regarding the Kurdish issue. The representatives of HDP and AKP government, including the Vice Prime Minister and Interior Minister of the time gathered together and reached a consensus on the political solution of the Kurdish Issue. In a joint declaration, the call for disarmament by Abdullah Öcalan, the imprisoned leader of PKK was shared with the public as well. Erdoğan initially defined the consensus as "a call that we have been waiting in anticipation to finalize the solution process that we started" and emphasized that its implementation was of a vital issue. After a month, however, he declared that he didn't agree with the content of the declaration saying that it had nothing to do with democracy. By that time Erdoğan had come to a position of denial on the Kurdish Issue, with a narrative that every other ethnic group had issues in the country.<sup>665</sup> At this point, it would be fair to argue that last remaining piece of AKP's democratization process, which has always been "*strategic and selective*"<sup>666</sup>, was practically over.

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<sup>664</sup> DW, *Protests and Deaths around Turkey over Handling of Kobani*, DW, 2014, available here: <https://www.dw.com/en/protests-and-deaths-around-turkey-over-handling-of-kobani/a-17986274>, last accessed on 07.02.2021.

<sup>665</sup> Sözcü, *Erdoğan Dolmabahçe mutabakatı için ne demişti?*, (What Had Erdoğan Said About Dolmabahçe Declaration?), Sözcü, 2015, available here: <https://www.sozcu.com.tr/2016/gundem/erdogan-dolmabahce-mutabakati-icin-ne-demisti-1200821/>, last accessed on 22.10.2020.

<sup>666</sup> David Isabel, "Strategic democratisation? A guide to understanding AKP in Power", *Journal of Contemporary European Studies*, 2016, vol.24., p. 478-493.

Considering the fact that Erdoğan has never been a Turkish nationalist in an ideological framework, his renunciation of the Kurdish issue is not ideological in character either. By giving deaf ear to the Kurdish electorate before the election, he aimed at winning the nationalist votes. Perhaps he was aware of the fact that he had lost his appeal among the Kurds because of the fluctuating trajectory of the Kurdish opening and therefore started including more nationalistic sentiments in his discourse. However, he had lost the Kurds to HDP and the nationalists to MHP simultaneously in June 2015 elections. The discourse of balance between the Kurds and nationalists was over and Erdoğan would embrace the latter in the coming period.

As the government could not be formed after June 2015 elections, repeat elections were declared to be held in November of the same year. Between the two elections, Turkey went through a dark period of 5 months loaded with intense terrorist attacks, some of which are as follows. As a reaction to Erdoğan's renunciation of the Kurdish Opening, the KCK (upper management of PKK) ended the ceasefire. Asucicide bomber who was later identified as an ISIS member, blew himself killing 33 people (socialist and Kurdish youth) in Suruç who were just about to go to Kobane to help local people in removing the wreckage after the ISIS siege, two police officers were killed execution style in their sleep at their homes, Turkey conducted air strike on both PKK and ISIS targets in cross-border operations, 4 soldiers were killed in Lice, 8 in Siirt, curfew was declared in Cizre after 20 civilians losign their lives in skirmishes with security forces, 16 soldiers were killed in Dağlıca, 13 in Iğdır by PKK, and finally 103 people were killed when a bomb went off in a protest in the capitol city of Ankara<sup>667</sup>.

The public felt extremely threatened in this intense period of terrorism and fear and anxiety spread across the country, which, then, gave way to conservative politics that prioritizes security over freedoms. The broad society was ready to buy into the perception that Turkey was under attack by both PKK and ISIS without much hesitation, because the PKK was an established source of fear and insecurity in the country and the ISIS had become Turkey's next door neighbour. With such a perception being broadly accepted, only a strong government with a powerful leadership started to be seen as the only way out by more people than before. In line with this expectation, sweeping detentions and arrests were made and curfew was declared in eastern and southeastern provinces without much resistance outside

<sup>667</sup>Bianet, *What Happened in Turkey Between June 7 and November 1, 2015?*, Bianet, available here: <https://bianet.org/english/politics/212210-what-happened-in-turkey-between-june-7-and-november-1-2015>, last accessed on 27.10.2020.

the predominantly Kurdish Southeastern Turkey. As people expect the state take proportional measures to the level and presence of threat<sup>668</sup>, the perception of threat justified the restrictions brought upon basic rights and freedoms, that is to say; the securitizations, in this period.

Eventually, Erdoğan and AKP came out victorious from the reign of terror and won 49.5% of the votes in November 2015, the repeat elections of June. Increasing its vote share by 9% and 53 seats in the Parliament, the AKP obtained the Parliamentary majority to form a single-party government.<sup>669</sup> Fear had guided more people towards Erdoğan leadership representing about 20% increase in its vote share, and this was duly recognized and by the leadership. From then on, Erdoğan would follow security politics, which would be based on *maintenance of fear* and re-orient his politics in a more nationalistic position as it paid off in November elections. Acknowledging the “free” implementation of the elections, the EU’s 2015 Progress Report of Turkey draws the attention on the “lack of fairness” in the campaign process. According to the Report, the campaign process was heavily affected by the terror strikes that increased dramatically and the restrictive policies of the government that followed them. Eventually, the opposition had to run the election campaigns under government pressure, in which they did not exhibit the same success with June elections.<sup>670</sup>

## Conclusion

Disarticulation of the secularist establishment and installation of control over the TAF and high judiciary did not only remove the tutelary powerhouses from within Turkish state system that had the habit of intervening into civilian politics but also provided practically unchecked power to Erdoğan and AKP leadership. In both discourse and policy making, politics ceased to be the art of reconciliation for the AKP as it started giving deaf ear to the demands of the opposition. In the absence of effective political opposition, the right to assembly and freedom of speech remained to be the key venues of manifestation of dissidence. Expectedly, these two areas were primarily pressured and securitized by the AKP, in its authoritarian turn. Reconciliatory policies of reformist years were replaced by a clearly agonistic policymaking and a polarizing discourse.

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<sup>668</sup>Buzan Barry (1983), *ibid.*, p.20.

<sup>669</sup>See the results of November 2015 Elections here: <https://www.haberturk.com/secim/secim2015/genel-secim-1-kasim>, last accessed on 27.10.2020.

<sup>670</sup> See 2015 Turkey Progress Report of EU here: [https://www.ab.gov.tr/files/5%20Ekim/2015\\_ilerleme\\_raporu\\_tr.pdf](https://www.ab.gov.tr/files/5%20Ekim/2015_ilerleme_raporu_tr.pdf), p. 7, last accessed on 28.10.2020.

All in all, 2011-2016 was the first period of re-securitization, in which Erdoğan leadership incrementally grew assertive and authoritarian limiting the exercise of basic rights and freedoms for many groups. In this period, Erdoğan polarized the society, antagonized its former collaborator, Gülenists, followed exclusionary policies towards non-conservative groups, specifically the ones that were actively involved in Gezi protests, and finally re-framed the Kurdish issue as a matter of national security, reversing the agenda of his reformist years.

#### **a. Strategic Aims and Gains**

The beginning of this period marked AKP's withdrawal from reformist policies and the commencement of its authoritarian turn. The turn was deliberate because it started immediately after the landslide election victory of the AKP in the absence of any socio-political challenge. Reforms aimed at EU access had helped the Party to disarticulate the secularist establishment, the only rival powerhouse back then, with the collaboration of GM. Obtaining clear approval of voter base about the oppressive policies during and after the Gezi protests, Erdoğan felt totally disillusioned with the reform agenda.

Considering the significant differences in the world view and political orientations between the participants and supporters of Gezi protests and Erdoğan's well-integrated conservative base, it was not a challenge for Erdoğan to insulate his base from the protests and portray them as enemies of Turkey. Yet, upon parting ways with Erdoğan, the GM started posing a significant risk through the means that it controlled within the state, such as judicial bureaucracy and law enforcement, and civil societal means such as media and the activities of the NGOs that it controlled. In such a milieu, Erdoğan had to insulate his supporter base from GM's influence and disarticulate them in bureaucracy in order to establish a practically uncontested power. For the insulation, rather than going into a contest of who better represents the conservative values, Erdoğan did something very effective and accused the GM with high treason. High treason was, in practice, mostly about the GM's insistence on the autonomy of its agenda and resistance to Erdoğan's domination, yet, this was enough to declare them as public enemy in the eyes of Erdoğan's supporters. Disarticulation of GM in bureaucracy was limited to a mass re-shuffling of Gülenist cadres starting from the ones involved in December 17 corruption investigations. With this, Erdoğan got rid-off the immediate threat stemming from the investigations and threatened any other potential investigations that would target his leadership.

All in all, in this period, Erdoğan has been able to repress the Gezi protests and oppress the GM effectively. In other words, he tackled the two most significant challenges to his rule in this period, yet this consolidation of power in his persona came with a significant fall in democratic credentials, freedom of speech and rule of law. *Erdoğan has survived in power going down an authoritarian path.* The irony here is, while all the authoritarian drift was happening, most analyses focused on Gezi Protests and Gülen Movement as Erdoğan's dissidence. The challenge from the opposition parties has never worried Erdoğan or gone beyond keeping the political game "up and running".

### **b. Construction of Threat**

In this period, two major threat concepts were created by the AKP. The first one is "external powers" that refers to the roots and motivation of Gezi protests and the second one is the "parallel state" referring to the bureaucratic presence of Gülen Movement. The common point between the two threat conceptions is that they both attack the legitimacy of targeted groups. Like in most acts of securitizations the de-legitimizing of the groups justified "counter measures" that spanned from unlawful suppression of the protests through brute force of the police to closing down media organs, educational institutions and civil society initiatives.

The recrimination of the Gezi Protests via framing the protestors as the apparati of external powers that hideously aimed at ousting Erdoğan was equated with conspiring against the stability and progress of Turkey. The size and scope of the accusation had made it impossible to evaluate or test the accusation based on facts since the facts were simply not available. What AKP did was re-incarnating the well established "everyone-against-us" perception in Turkey and juxtaposing it with mobilized opposition. As for the GM, the accusation of being the parallel state was enough to disrupt the organized nature of the Movement within bureaucracy, yet Erdoğan would have to elevate the accusations to terrorism to uproot the GM altogether in the next period. He constantly argued that the "parallel state" had betrayed him as the sole legitimate representative of the public will and conducted an organized attack on the "elected leader" with a judicial coup that came in the form of corruption investigations. For the terrorism accusations, he would have to wait for something more dramatic than "judicial coup", which came in the coup attempt of 2016 that is analyzed in the following chapter.

The third threat conception can be regarded as the revival of the Kurdish issue in the hands of Erdoğan whose policies dramatically fluctuated and ended up with re-securitization



of the issue. However, Erdoğan did not go authoritarian for the whole opposition simultaneously. When he attacked the Gezi protestors he was postponing his struggle with the GM. Similarly, when he attacked the GM he was trying to maintain the Kurds on his side. As much as possible, he has never taken on his dissidence at the same time. Another reason for Erdoğan to delay the re-securitization of the Kurdish issue was the arithmetic of July 2015 elections. When Erdoğan realized that he was not as popular as he used to be among the Kurdish voter in the presence of pro-Kurdish HDP leadership that was successful at mainstreaming, he recast the matter in security terms to restrict the playground of HDP. The delay is an indicative of the fact that securitization is often times done in line with the interests of the ruling elite.

### **c. Target Groups**

After winning the 2011 elections, the AKP also parted ways with its “once essential” symbiote, the Gülenists, and the two turned on each other. The first public row between the AKP and Gülenists was the questioning attempt of Erdoğan’s confidant, the undersecretary of the National Intelligence Organization (MİT), through which the Gülenists, perhaps, aimed at discrediting Erdoğan in the eyes of the public. Despite all the tension between the two, this remained to be a contained crisis and did not turn into an all-out war. AKP’s response came in closure of dersanes which were an important source of revenue and recruitment. Eventually the dersanes were closed and as there was not a significant public reaction the AKP had tested the waters for bigger moves against the Gülenists. When the Gülenists stroke back with corruption investigations, Erdoğan was ready to de-legitimize them as judicial coup attempt. In his discursive defence, he identified his survival in power with the survival of the country and portrayed the investigations as an attack to the whole country. Carrying his accusation on Gülenists further, he called the Movement as “parallel state” and declaring them as “public enemy”, he started implementing and identity-based securitization. Gülenists were legally and morally excluded by Erdoğan’s discourse as a justification for his onslaught on them.

The most important challenge to AKP’s agonistic policies came with Gezi protests that were driven by the feeling of claustrophobia that had reached its saturation point. Erdoğan’s oppressive policies and intimidating discourse made a small sit-in that started with environmental concerns explode into a mass protest that reflected across the country. He, then, framed the protests as a threat to national security and targeted its legitimacy by

denigrating the protestors, linking them with external powers and positioning them against conservative values. The participants of Gezi protests were also legally, morally and practically excluded in Erdoğan's discourse, which was bought into and appreciated by his conservative electoral base.

As Erdoğan had abandoned the Peace Process with Kurds before the June 2015 general elections, a significant number of Kurds abandoned him in the elections and supported pro-Kurdish HDP. Erdoğan realized he had lost the support of the Kurds and started playing into Turkish nationalism in through a security oriented discourse. He, then, took a major step in symbolic terms and claimed that there were no Kurdish issues in the country anymore as the other ethnicities had problems as well. With this re-orientation he opted to remove the Kurdish issue from the realm of political discussion and re-positioned it as a security matter. With this move, the very political leader who took the most significant steps in de-securitization of the Kurdish issue turned the tables and started re-securitizing it.

#### **d. Discourse and Orientation**

In This period Erdoğan opted for “bonding capital” among his supporters rather than “bridging capital” to appeal to a more diverse voter base, because he had already established a stable conservative audience that he dominated without politically meaningful competition, and such domination would be enough to keep him in power. After 2011 general elections he started giving signals of inserting more conservative content into his policy making on the face of a dissidence that incrementally became more vocal. As the reactions of the opposition accumulated into Gezi protests Erdoğan placed a wedge between his supporters and the protestors by increasing his accusation on them. From Gezi onwards, he became increasingly polarizing to sustain his audience and diminish internal disputes. He also invested in competitive victimhood as the new mode of mobilization by augmenting the deprivations and sufferings that the conservative masses experienced at the hands of the secularist establishment, which was identified with the main opposition CHP. Just like his policies, Erdoğan's supporters also became insensitive and deaf on the demands of the opposition as they were heavily and exclusively informed by pro-government media. Eventually they stood behind Erdoğan's exclusionary policies towards all the major securitized groups of this period; Gezi supporters, Gülenists and Kurds.

Erdoğan's new and increasingly assertive conservatism found its voice in the concept of “New Turkey”, which reflected as “native and national” in the socio-cultural space. Both

concepts are in harmony with exclusionary policies of Erdoğan leadership and the competitive victimhood that it communicated to its audience. Thus, it would be fair to argue that the AKP leadership crafted consistent discourse and policies in their extremely agonistic policies and re-securitization of the dissidence in the period that covers from 2011 to 2016.

## Chapter 4

### 2016-2021: Systemic Domination

The power struggle between the AKP and GM, that is to say, from the Gülenists' perspective, Erdoğan's efforts to subordinate the Movement into his personal rule and from the AKP's perspective, the Movement's efforts to position itself as the new establishment<sup>671</sup>, accumulated into a bloody coup attempt in 2016. The coup started at the night of July 15, and was subdued in less than 24 hours. Two hours after the coup was set in motion, Erdoğan addressed the public over a television channel and called people on to the streets to resist the coup. He also disclosed it to the public that it was the Gülenists within the TAF who organized the coup and positioned them as "insurgents" against "national will".<sup>672</sup> National will was carefully selected to emphasize the illegitimacy of the coup and promote mass mobilization against it.

The official explanation of the Erdoğan leadership stipulated that the country was attacked by a Gülenist junta on July 15 2016. The Presidency's declaration drew a framework as follows: "Rogue army officers who belonged to the Gülenist Terrorist Organization/Parallel State Structure (FETO/PSS) staged a bloody coup, which cost the lives of 250 people and injured 2.740. The Government, opposition parties, civil society organizations and ordinary citizens joined together and defended the democratic order."<sup>673</sup>

Fethullah Gülen, on the other hand, denied any involvement in the coup attempt multiple times, yet he was caught in the defensive. Since all the media outlets of the GM were closed down and giving voice to Gülen's perspective on conventional or social media was regarded as supporting terrorism by Erdoğan, Gülen had no other chance but resort to the Western media. In an interview he gave to BBC, he claimed that Turkey ceased to be a regime

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<sup>671</sup>Ete Hatem, "Reframing the July 15 Coup Attempt: A Political and Sociological Examination", *Bilig Türk Dünyası Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*, 2018, no. 87, p. 179-202.

<sup>672</sup> Yeni Şafak, *President Erdoğan's First Statement Regarding the Coup*, YouTube, 2017, available here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vPcDJZ7yg1o>, last accessed on 01.11.2020.

<sup>673</sup> Presidency of Turkish Republic, *15 July Coup Attempt and the Parallel State Structure*, TCCB, available here: [https://www.tccb.gov.tr/assets/dosya/15Temmuz/15temmuz\\_en2.pdf](https://www.tccb.gov.tr/assets/dosya/15Temmuz/15temmuz_en2.pdf), last accessed on 01.11.2020.

of Constitutional democracy under Erdoğan, yet he would never go outside the boundaries of democracy and rule of law for any purpose.<sup>674</sup> In another one that he gave to France 24, he denied any link or involvement in the failed coup attempt and said: “I urge this coup attempt be investigated by an independent international committee that could be formed within EU, UN or International Court of Justice in Hague. If they find the smallest of links, I am ready to face whatever consequence that brings... I wouldn’t know any officer of TAF in person.”<sup>675</sup> The idea of an international committee was totally disregarded by Erdoğan. In fact, two most relevant figures to the coup; Hakan Fidan, the head of National Intelligence Organization (MİT) and Hulusi Akar, then the Chief of General Staff, did not even attend the “invitations” of the Parliamentary Committee on the Coup assembled in Grand Turkish National Assembly.<sup>676</sup> In yet another interview, he even accused Erdoğan of “staging” the coup to further his campaign against the Movement<sup>677</sup>. When he spoke to New York Times, he was more comprehensive: “As democracy cannot be achieved by military coups, republic cannot be strengthened. Neither can Turkey be integrated to the rest of the world. The current government abused the concept of coup by labelling the corruption investigations as one, yet we are against such interventions too.”<sup>678</sup>

However, neither Gülen himself nor his followers offered a simple and consistent account of what really happened on July 15. There were either caught unprepared assuming that they were behind the coup but they were certain about its success, or they did not know what really went down that night. Either way, they did not have a good story to offer to public. Furthermore, there was a prominent Gülenist presence in many public offices in a tightly-organized manner for which the Movement did not have a convincing narrative. It was clear that the Movement was expanding for decades and accumulating power within the state

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<sup>674</sup> BBC News, *Exiled cleric Fethullah Gulen Rejects Turkey 'Coup' Claims*, YouTube, 2016, available here: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FRF0cFRm\\_s4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FRF0cFRm_s4), last accessed on 02.11.2020.

<sup>675</sup> France24 English, *Exclusive - Interview with exiled cleric Fethullah Gulen*, YouTube, 2017, available here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5QseSvzllw>, last accessed on 02.11.2020.

<sup>676</sup> These two figures were central to the failed coup attempt as Akar was the top commander and Fidan was the top spy of the country. The heavy accusations and unprecedented crackdown on GM would require a much better clarity that what Erdoğan had to offer. While a Parliamentary investigation commission was established to bring clarity to questions about the coup in November 2016, the persistent demands of the opposition deputies on summoning Akar and Fidan were blocked by the AKP deputies, therefore, the coup commission finished the investigations without investigating the two most relevant personas. More available here: <https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2016/12/turkey-coup-commission-ends-work-questions-linger.html>

<sup>677</sup> Fontanella-Khan Amana, *Fethullah Gülen: Turkey Coup may have been 'Staged' by Erdoğan Regime*, The Guardian, 2016, available here: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jul/16/fethullah-gulen-turkey-coup-erdogan>, last accessed on 01.11.2020.

<sup>678</sup> Saul Stephanie, *An Exiled Cleric Denies Playing a Leading Role in Coup Attempt*, 2016, New York Times, available here: <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/17/us/fethullah-gulen-turkey-coup-attempt.html>, last accessed on 03.11.2020.

huge campaign against two important groups became possible with the alliances he made with two nationalist groups that levy significant influence within the state machinery; the MHP and the rather curious Patriotic Party (VP), after the coup attempt. The alliance pushed the AKP leadership in a more nationalistic position that was crafted in an anti-Western manner. The VP leader Doğu Perinçek claimed that the AKP embraced the political line of VP on the issues of security policies, Eurasia relations, especially building good relations with Russia and Iran, and “FETO”.<sup>762</sup> Considering far less than 1 % vote share of the VP, its importance comes from the organized cadres that it runs within the bureaucracy, especially in judiciary and TAF. As for MHP, it has an established vote share around 10% and has bureaucratic cadres on which it exercises influence. MHP leader Devlet Bahçeli has been able to fill the gaps created within bureaucracy by the mass purge of Gülenists with pro-MHP cadres and enjoyed guiding policies on any politically significant issue using the reliance that Erdoğan has on him. So much so that it has been often times stated in political debates that “the drum is hanging on Erdoğan’s shoulders yet the stick is in Bahçeli’s hands”<sup>763</sup>. This thesis agrees with this framing and this is why it identifies the MHP as “strategic enabler and limiter” for the AKP. The enabling role of MHP extended beyond giving the presidential system as a gift to Erdoğan, as it also supported AKP in legislation processes. Without Bahçeli’s support, AKP would be a “lame duck” in the Parliament even after the presidential system became fully functional.

As there is no evidence because of less-than-transparent and unaccountable policy making of Erdoğan, it may fairly be argued that AKP’s reliance on MHP and VP is far beyond anything desirable for Erdoğan. While he still stays on top of the power configuration established after the coup attempt, Erdoğan heavily relies on MHP and VP for legislation and effectiveness in bureaucracy. This reliance places restrictions on Erdoğan’s discourse, policies, and tactical and strategic manoeuvrability. This restriction was framed by Kemal

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<sup>762</sup> See for Perinçek’s. claims: <https://odatv4.com/akp-iki-konu-haric-bizim-cizgimize-geldi-1410171200.html>, last accessed on 19.12.2020. Here Perinçek mentions that the only issues that Erdoğan does not agree with him are about the philosophical roots of secularism, that is, the Enlightenment. With this, he implies that there are irreconcilable differences between him and Erdoğan on the matters of religion and its management, yet they agree on most issues that are relevant to daily politics.

<sup>763</sup>This expression was frequently used by political analysts to frame the relations between MHP and AKP. For example a senior journalist, Murat Yetkin, argues that Bahçeli has been harvesting the support that he provided for Erdoğan for the transition into Presidential system in Parliament and in the process of the Referendum that made the transition possible. Available here: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O8HgL378\\_Cg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O8HgL378_Cg). As explained in the previous parts of this chapter, the presidential system would not be possible without the strategic support of MHP. Another journalist, Uğur Dündar, claims that Bahçeli has been the most important strategic political actor in recent years and agrees that he exercises a huge amount of “checks and balances” on Erdoğan. Dündar also asserts that despite all the explicitly unprincipled nature of Bahçeli’s policies, he has been able to put shackles on Erdoğan’s feet. Available here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WiDgc4MSYRE>.

Kılıçdaroğlu, the leader of the main opposition, CHP, as “tutelage” over Erdoğan leadership. Kılıçdaroğlucapitalized on the lame duck status and argued that Erdoğan could make no decision without the approval of MHP.<sup>764</sup> Indeed, being aware of the fact that there was a “zero-sum-game” between Erdoğan’s oscillations into nationalism and possible Kurdish opening, Bahçeli prevented such possible openings (even if there was) since the formation of the alliance after the coup attempt. Another restraint on his manoeuvrability is the formation of two new parties by prominent former cabinet members of his governments; Future Party by Ahmet Davutoğlu and Democracy and Progress Party by Ali Babacan. With their positive growth trend and culturally conservative policies, these two parties further ended Erdoğan’s monopoly on conservative politics alongside the nationalist İP. All things considered, Erdoğan is trapped in a conservatism that is unprecedentedly nationalistic and security oriented.

### **b. Construction of Threat**

Main threat construction in this period was built around the concept of terrorism targeting the GM and the pro-Kurdish politics that has been the usual suspect of security policies. While the GM was framed as an existential threat to national security, pro-Kurdish politics was repressed through arrest of its leadership, assignment of trustees to municipalities and persecution of the signatories in Academics for Peace. In both cases, Erdoğan has been persuasive in his public outreach. The pro-Kurdish was closely associated with terrorism by the conservative masses and the GM had –finally- committed high treason for the whole country with the failed coup attempt.

The main difference between the two groups that have been securitized in this period by the AKP is that while the arrests were limited to leadership in pro-Kurdish politics, the GM was terminated altogether in its social capital. The irony here is, in pre-coup period, Erdoğan used to blame the leadership of GM with high treason and portray the mass participation of the Movement as victims who were being deceived and misguided by their leaders. In the aftermath of the coup however, he persecuted the mass participation in hundreds of thousands while the leadership of the Movement largely fled the country.

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<sup>764</sup>SputnikTr, *Kılıçdaroğlu: Davul Erdoğan’ın Boynunda, Tokmak Bahçeli’nin Elinde*, (Kılıçdaroğlu: The Drum Hangs in Erdoğan’s Shoulder, Yet The Stick is in Bahçeli’s Hands), 2020, available here: <https://tr.sputniknews.com/turkiye/202006291042346285-kilicdaroglu-davul-erdoganin-boynunda-tokmak-bahcelinin-elinde/>, last accessed on 18.11.2020.

The state of exception that had been going on since the 2011 elections had involved securitization of different groups such as Gezi protestors, Gülenists and –again- Kurds. The coup attempt escalated the threat perception in the broad society and provided a pretext to AKP to declare OHAL. As a systematized and legalized state of exception, the OHAL was practically used to eliminate the adversaries of the AKP and effectively mobilize its supporters. The OHAL practices also facilitated the centralization of power and legitimating of the presidential regime, which was actually endorsed under OHAL. OHAL and the presidential system formalized Erdoğan’s personal agenda as a state program at the expense of democratic credentials of the country.

*Since national security is like a scar tissue in Turkey, it can easily be irritated and bled. The conspiracy theories that flooded the country in the re-securitization period of the AKP (since 2011) further deteriorated the fragility of perceptions on national security. Erdoğan masterfully played this fragility to his benefit by identifying the survival of the state with the survival of AKP in power. He said; “The matter in hand is a matter of Turkey, a matter of Turkish nations and it is far beyond the AKP and Erdoğan. If the AKP wins in our country, Turkey will win. If it loses, the country will lose.”<sup>765</sup> Since such claims are beyond the jurisdiction and judgement capacity of average supporter, they either tend to delegate their will to that of the leader and bandwagon. Another thing that facilitates their “bandwagoning” of his followers is the fact that the conspiracy-laden discourse that Erdoğan employs rendered them patriots just by supporting him. In other words, Erdoğan conveys the sensation of patriotism in his electoral base by attacking his adversaries with heavy accusations and gets them rally behind his leadership.*

### **c. Target Groups**

Utilizing OHAL to the best of his benefit, Erdoğan was able to mobilize the whole state machinery in an explicitly antagonistic manner against Gülenists and pro-Kurdish politics, bring his supporters around this antagonism and harvest support for it from the opposition. To expedite his fight against the GM he elevated their threat level from “parallel

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<sup>765</sup>CNNTürk, Erdoğan: 'AK Parti Kaybederse Türkiye Kaybeder', ('Turkey Will Lose if AKP Loses'), 2018, available here: <https://www.cnnturk.com/turkiye/erdogan-ak-parti-kaybederse-turkiye-kaybeder>, last accessed on 19.12.2020.

state” to “Fethullahist Terrorist Organisation”, both concepts being his construction. In the first step, the GM had been elevated from an oppositional civilian movement and their organized bureaucratic apparatus with an agenda of their own that is little too autonomous to a junta-like bureaucratic structure that aims to overthrow the elected government of Turkey and their civilian extension. He had changed the centre of gravity of his definition from civilian to bureaucratic to makethem look more of a powerhouse that poses a national threat rather than a social movement with a huge influence.

In other words, he had shifted the definition from a society-centric movement to a state-centric one that aims to further its own agenda through exercising bureaucratic power. With this shift to state-centrism, the whole nature of the GM implicitly changed from an overgrown civilian movement that promoted its agenda in the public space to a power-hungry and hegemony-seeking organisation. As the GM strictly remained within the boundaries of law in their campaign against Erdoğan, he incriminated them through their “evil” intentions. He has never substantiated his claims on these intentions, yet he never had to. He effectively isolated the GM from the conservative masses and utilized his media monopoly. GM has never had a good discourse with clear-cut boundaries, which was to its benefit in terms of appealing to different individuals and having discursive flexibility. Yet the social psychology had turned against them and the voids in their discourse were filled by Erdoğan’s explicit, easy-to-digest and coherent antagonism.

All in all, Erdoğan has been extremely successful in making the GM into a terrorist organisation despite extreme lack of violence in Movement’s habitus. Since the state was exclusively controlled by Erdoğan, who also dominated the security discourse in public opinion he has re-positioned the state “contra-Gülen” and instilled different shades of negative sentiments from fear and hate to mere scepticism in broad society. Contra-Gülenism has quickly turned into a state policy, be it with an uncertain future. It was because of this successful communication that he had no significant reaction from the society for the abuse of power and extra-legal measures that he took. As a result, he has accomplished his targets and seized or shut down the institutional infrastructure of the GM; such as, schools, NGOs, media outlets and companies.

As for the Kurds, Erdoğan has had no problem with them that can be defined as essential. Neither the political Islamism of National Outlook Movement where his political mind was shaped nor the new conservatism of Turkey where he rose to political prominence



had any issues with Kurds and their demands. Therefore, his attitude, be it de-securitizing through openings and reforms or re-securitizing through the security oriented policies that he adopted in his authoritarian turn, was shaped by pragmatic ends-oriented considerations. Election outcomes have always been the ultimate and organizing principle in his attitude towards Kurds. This explains how he has been the leader who launched the most important opening towards Kurds that has also been the person who restricted the political space for Kurds and imprisoned the academics who defended Kurdish demands.

As explained in the previous chapter, Erdoğan had shifted in nationalistic policies upon his frustration with the Kurdish support that he received in June 2015 elections. In the aftermath of the coup attempt, while he centralized power in his persona and caught the social psychology as the sovereign saviour among and beyond his voter base, he re-securitized the Kurdish issue in line with his recently embraced nationalism and the alliance that he formed with the MHP. He targeted the pro-Kurdish municipalities, HDP leadership and the Academics for Peace initiative that stressed the importance of political solution to the Kurdish issue. *Thus, Erdoğan re-securitized the political will, representation and solution offers on the Kurdish issue.* This re-securitization actually sets a textbook example for securitization politics, because in all three issues; the local administration, party leadership and demands of the academics, he pushed the issue outside the space of political deliberation and made it into an incontestable security matter.

#### **d. Discourse and Orientation**

Erdoğan government used the failed coup attempt as pretext to crack down on dissidence further starting from the very next day. Erdoğan accused the GM for masterminding and orchestrating the coup and elevated his incrimination from an agonistic level to an outright antagonism in a holistic manner. In other words, he accused the GM as a whole and incriminated everyone somewhat affiliated with the Movement, from housewives to generals for the coup attempt. In order to do this, he allied with MHP and rather shady VP who exercise significant influence in judiciary and TAF. This alliance, which was named as People's Alliance, was important for a variety of reasons. First of all, all the entities in the Alliance were antagonistic against GM and worked in harmony in their effort to eliminate it as a social entity. Second, the Alliance carried Erdoğan further right in the political spectrum through its newly acquired nationalistic allies. Third, the Alliance carried the AKP further from the West with whom the Party had already had problems because of its ever-increasing

authoritarian policies. The People's Alliance, often times, created anti-American and anti-EU discourses and restricted Erdoğan's evergreen pragmatism. Fourth, the alliance with nationalists shrank the political arena for Erdoğan and limited his manoeuvrability on the Kurdish issue. In very brief, the People's Alliance took Erdoğan's assertive conservatism further amalgamating it with nationalism. Erdoğan's reliance on MHP, which started with the coup attempt and accelerated with the transition into presidential system, made him "retool" in the conservative world view and use more nationalistic elements in discourse and policy.

As this thesis was being finalized, the AKP leadership was having problems with a decreasing voter support that went far below the 2019 local elections which were already a relative failure. The high inflation rates and devaluated currency signified an undeniably deteriorating economy that the Minister of Treasury and Finance and Erdoğan's son in law Berat Albayrak resigned from his post. On the face of an increasingly disenchanted voter base Erdoğan attempted to revive a "controlled and limited reformism" through senior figures of the Party yet took an opposite stance, perhaps with the pressure of his allies. He could not undertake a deep and broad reform, because would not survive freedom of expression and rule of law in their democratic forms. However, he needed reform to appeal to foreign direct investment and persuade the Kurdish voter who had deprived him off the desired support in all the elections since 2015. In the less-than-consolidated status of his rule, what he will do has yet to be seen in the junction between further authoritarianism and controlled reformism.

#### **e. Non-Governmental Technologies of Domination: *Media, Private Sector and Civil Society***

In its authoritarian turn, Erdoğan leadership used different means and venues to dominate the fields that are outside the direct scope of the executive but improves it in significant ways. Main fields as such are media, business world (private sector) and civil society, each with specific tasks. Media enabled Erdoğan to control the access to information, be it partly, and control the narrative on socio-political agenda. Private sector helped him create loyal people from among business circles and use their resources in his interests, such as creating a slush fund for media ownership. Civil society extended AKP's message further in the societal realm and expressed solidarity behind Erdoğan at critical junctions. Despite the absence of substantial evidence, the activities in all these three sectors looked somewhat orchestrated by the AKP leadership in less-than-official ways. They served both offensive and defensive purposes as they facilitated political functioning of the AKP in effective ways and

pressed on dissidence in a variety of ways, some of which are expanded in the following parts.

### **i. Media Ownership and Restrictions on Social Media**

When Erdoğan came to power in 2002 he did not have an established media to support him in other than some minor Islamist outlets. It would even be fair to argue that he came to power despite the opposition of the mainstream media in Turkey. The problem with the mainstream media was that it had predominantly secular preferences which had strong parallels with the socio-political imaginary of the secularist establishment. In other words, the mainstream media did not represent the lifestyle choices or political preferences of the majority in the country. The support of Gülenist media outlets filled the gap to some extent for Erdoğan but, following the agenda of their own, Gülenists could not be relied on in critical junctions. This is why Erdoğan wanted to build a media machinery that he would follow his agenda and disseminate his messages in more loyal and effective ways. Upon consolidating his power contra secularist establishment in 2007 he started pressuring the mainstream media which acted in oppositional editorial stance. In a decade Erdoğan established control over an overwhelming proportion of media outlets in the country through following major techniques.

The first technique was “maintaining the old loyalists” that were mostly Islamist outlets with limited outreach. Dailies such as *Yenişafak* and *Akit* and television channels like TV Net, *Akit*, Kanal 7 and Ülke TV constituted this group and they maintained loyal to him as of this thesis was being finalized in early 2021. The second technique was “economic and political incorporation” that involved integration of mainstream media into his media machinery. Doğuş Media’s *re-alignment* with the AKP and *handover* of oppositional Doğan Media to a loyalist business group, Demirören Holding are the major cases of this technique. The third technique was “purchasing” of the media organs by loyalist business people from state-run Savings Deposit Insurance Fund (TMSF). The 2001 financial crisis and the following legal regulations had affected media groups that also had investments in the banking sector. Some of them totally vanished off the media market and some others were seized by TMSF.<sup>766</sup> Turkuvaz Media Group, Çukurova Media and Türk Media; three large groups of mainstream media that had been confiscated by TMSF for their violations of law, were sold to Erdoğan’s loyal business groups and the Turkuvaz Media Group was directly

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<sup>766</sup>Kurban Dilek, Sözeri Ceren (2011), *ibid.*, p.11.

managed by Erdoğan's son in law, Berat Albayrak.<sup>767</sup> The Fourth technique was “domestication” of media outlets through assigning executives to their boards. Ciner Media Group, which maintained mild opposition on certain issues, sets an example to this technique. The fifth technique was the “complete shutdown” of oppositional media. Samanyolu and Zaman groups that were affiliated with the GM were shut down upon the Movement parting ways with the AKP and going oppositional.

In its takeover of media outlets, the AKP has used both the carrot and stick. Once the largest media conglomerate, Doğan Media resisted to domestication, the AKP leadership cracked down on it using the Group's tax liabilities. Doğan Media was fined 2.5 billion USD for its tax debts while its total economic worth was 2.8 billion USD. Being dragged to the bargaining table more than 80% of the fine was remitted and Doğan Media started selling its papers.<sup>768</sup> The carrot came in two venues: First the new owners of these media outlets were given large public tenders. The second, these outlets were “incentivized” through public advertisements by central and local administrations. As Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality had been a major such contributor under AKP administration, when the AKP lost the municipality in 2019 elections, two dailies decided to shut themselves down.

From a holistic perspective Erdoğan's control over media had three major venues: First one is the private media, details of whose takeover is briefed above. The second is state-run Turkish Radio and Television Corporation (TRT), which runs 16 channels, which spans from news channel to music, and is publicly funded. Despite the legal regulations that stipulate the TRT to broadcast in an impartial and unbiased manner, the group acts like an official media organ of the AKP. “According to the Monitoring and Evaluation report of the Radio and Television Supreme Council (RTÜK), of the total broadcast time from TRT News reports on political rallies, 89.52 per cent (13 hours 32 minutes) was given over to the AKP, 5.29 per cent (48 minutes) to the MHP, 4.96 per cent (45 minutes) to the CHP, and 0.22 per cent (2 minutes) to the BDP.”<sup>769</sup>

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<sup>767</sup>Alan Ümit, *5 Soruda AKP Döneminde Medyanın Dönüşümü* (Transformation of Media Under AKP Rule in Five Questions), BirGün, 2020, available here: <https://www.birgun.net/haber/5-soruda-akp-doneminde-medyanin-donusumu-285105>, last accessed on 27.12.2020.

<sup>768</sup>Akın Doğan, *Doğan Grubuna Vergi Cezasıyla Kaç Kuş Vuruldu?* (How Many Birds Hit With Tax Fines of Doğan Group?), P24, 2014, available here: <http://platform24.org/guncel/481/dogan-grubuna-vergi-cezasiyla-kac-kus-vuruldu>, last accessed on 27.12.2020.

<sup>769</sup>Ertan Tayfun, *TRT's Failure as a Public Broadcasting Institution*, available here: <http://platform24.org/en/articles/180/trt-s-failure-as-a-public-broadcasting-institution>, last accessed on 27.12.2020.

The third venue is the social media, which Erdoğan has never liked for the impossibility of exercising complete control. The AKP leadership then exercised partial control on social media through repression of individual users via prosecution and banishment of the accounts with the accusation that they provided harmful content. Between the years 2013 and 2018 20,474 people were pressed legal charges for their posts on social media by the authorities. Only in 2020 more than 36.000 people were prosecuted for “insulting the president” more than 12 thousand of whom stood trial.<sup>770</sup> In a rough comparison these numbers indicate that Erdoğan’s personal tolerance as President is far less than that of the regime. At time the AKP has also shut down the venues of social media altogether. In regard to this, Twitter and YouTube were shut down multiple times. Amnesty International framed Erdoğan’s crackdown on Twitter as a “new low” in internet freedom in 2014<sup>771</sup>, yet the Erdoğan regime reached lower points when they shut down Wikipedia, which is used for far less political reasons than Twitter, for more than 2 years between 2017 and 2019.

All in all, Erdoğan’s policy on social media has not been very different from that of conventional media. First, he has tried to control the behaviour of users through repressive means and if it didn’t work to the best of his interest, then he prevented access to these venues altogether as buying the social media companies has not been an option. Just like shutting down the private companies, NGOs and media organs of dissent, and jailing the opposition leaders, Erdoğan shut the venues of social media down with the persuasion of his supporters. His media policy can be summarized as a “a historically conservative, redistributive, panoptic and discriminatory media autocracy”<sup>772</sup>.

## ii. Crony Capitalism and the “Greenhouse Bourgeoisie”

When Erdoğan came to power, he did not have established business elite that would support him and finance his campaigns. He had only secured the support of conservative-Islamist groups that were called Anatolian Tigers. Yet, as predominantly provincial entrepreneur-

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<sup>770</sup>Cumhuriyet, *Soylu açıkladı: 20 bin 474 Kişiyeye Sosyal Medya Paylaşımı Nedeniyle İşlem Yapıldı* (Minister Soylu: 20,474 People Prosecuted for Social Media Posts), 2019, available here: <https://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/haber/soylu-acikladi-20-bin-474-kisiye-sosyal-medya-paylasimi-nedeniyle-islem-yapildi-1375418>, last accessed on 28.12.2020.

<sup>771</sup>AI, *Turkey: Pre-election Twitter shutdown brings internet freedom to a new low*, 2014, available here: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2014/03/turkey-pre-election-twitter-shutdown-brings-internet-freedom-new-low/>, last accessed on 28.12.2020.

<sup>772</sup>Akser Murat, Hawks-Baybars, B., “Media and Democracy in Turkey: Toward a Model of Neoliberal Media Autocracy”, *Middle East Journal of Culture and Communication*, 2012, vol. 5, no. 3, p. 302-321.

industrialist group, Tigers were much smaller in business volume than that of the established business elite with pro-Western and secular leanings organized under TÜSİAD<sup>773</sup>. Erdoğan has never had good tidings with TÜSİAD and attacked them with an ever-increasing fervour. In 2012, when he had a relatively democratic policy making, he criticized TÜSİAD for being anachronistic and pro-status quo. Anachronism here implies that his leadership represents a new *zeitgeist* and TÜSİAD fails to comprehend and eventually support it. In 2014, he was more aggressive in his attack and framed the expressions of its chairman as “high treason”. When the results of local elections of Istanbul in March 2019 were not accepted by Erdoğan, TÜSİAD had expressed their concern and Erdoğan told them to “know their place” in an explicitly insulting manner.<sup>774</sup> At this point, it would also be fair to argue that TÜSİAD has been less-than-vocal in Turkey’s authoritarian drift, yet, Erdoğan has never been able to fully subordinate it as they were too big in volume and integrated to global economic machinery.

Having risen to national politics from local, Erdoğan was well versed about the “rent creation” and how to “utilize public tenders to the best of his interest”. Furthermore, his political revisionism had an economic dimension that involved redistribution of wealth, which meant transfer of wealth to conservative entrepreneurs and masses alike. Bringing rent creation together with re-distributionism through public spending served his political vision of wealth transfer to the conservative, and created a loyal business group. AKP’s relationship with this business groups is based on mutual benefit at the expense of other (excluded) actors in the market and general public.<sup>775</sup>

The members of the conservative elite that were favoured by Erdoğan were expected to finance Erdoğan’s campaign and propaganda expenses in return for the favours that they received. Moreover, Erdoğan elevated them above market competition and rendered them a privileged group via construction, energy and infrastructure sectors that are largely controlled by the state. In this regard it must also be underlined that large projects of infrastructure, like

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<sup>773</sup>TÜSİAD stands for Turkish Industry and Business Association, and it is –by far– the largest business association in Turkey with 4500 members. In its self-identification, “Founded in 1971 to represent the Turkish business world, TÜSİAD is a voluntary, independent, non-governmental organization dedicated to promote welfare through private enterprise.” With a huge capacity, TÜSİAD represents 85% of Turkey’s foreign trade and provides 80% of corporate tax. Details available here: <https://tusiad.org/en/tusiad/about>.

<sup>774</sup>See mentioned conflicts of Erdoğan with TÜSİAD at different times via these links: <https://www.sozcu.com.tr/2014/gunun-icinden/vatana-ihanet-ettiler-446694/>, <https://www.posta.com.tr/erdogan-tusiada-yuklendi-111036>, <https://www.patronlardunyasi.com/haber/Erdogan-Kaygilyiz-diyen-TUSIAD-a-yuklendi-Herkes-haddini-bilecek/219953>, last accessed on 30.12.2021.

<sup>775</sup>Ocaklı Feyyaz, “Ahbaplar, Çavuşlar ve 2020 Türkiye’sinde Neoliberalizm”, (Cronies and Neoliberalism in Turkey in 2020), Birikim, <https://birikimdergisi.com/guncel/10350/ahbaplar-cavuslar-ve-2020-turkiyesinde-neoliberalizm>, last accessed on 31.12.2020.

roads, airports, bridges, dams, nuclear plants, tunnels etc., have huge convertibility to political propaganda as they materialize as Erdoğan's accomplishment in a developmentalist agenda.

According to the data provided by World Bank, 5 companies; Limak, Cengiz, Kolin, Kalyon and MNG Holdings constitute 5 of 10 companies that won public tenders between 1990 and 2018 worldwide.<sup>776</sup> The favours to these companies were not limited to handpicking them in state tenders. A parliamentary question revealed that these 5 companies enjoyed a total of 128 tax reductions, which at times, came down to total remission of tax.<sup>777</sup> This indicates that while they enjoyed the favours granted to them by Erdoğan, these companies did not provide much to public treasure, setting a clear example to crony capitalism.

AKP's intervention into market forces can be explained as practices of state capitalism in a system that still renders predominantly neo-liberal. Such interventions increased in parallel with AKP's gradual descent into authoritarianism as they required weak accountability and transparency. In other words, nepotistic interventions increased in parallel with fundamental erosion in rule of law, widespread corruption and subversion of key regulatory institutions that are rendered autonomous by the Constitution.<sup>778</sup> In order to run this crony capitalism and eventually create a *nouveau riche*, Erdoğan changed The Public Procurement Law 191 times in his reign. As they operate and grow under the favourable conditions created by Erdoğan leadership, this new rich can fairly be called "greenhouse bourgeoisie". Since they perform above and beyond market forces and flourish in the "greenhouse" of the state, it is near impossible to ascertain their real business capacity in a competitive world.

Other than the 5 companies mentioned above, there are some individual examples as well, among which, the Demirören Group deserves separate analysis. Like many other companies favoured by Erdoğan, Demirören got involved in media ownership alongside their established business practices. Demirören Group "... purchased the high-circulation daily newspapers Milliyet and Vatan. In classic style for AKP-linked businesses, it turned these newspapers into openly pro-government outlets, and they subsequently lost readers and market share... With its media wing doing the government's bidding, it will continue to win

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<sup>776</sup>The World Bank Infrastructure Finance PPPs & Guarantees, *Featured Rankings 1990 to 2019*, available here: <https://ppi.worldbank.org/en/snapshots/rankings>, last accessed on 01.01.2021.

<sup>777</sup> *Cumhuriyet, Cengiz, Limak, Kalyon, Kolin ve Makyol Firmalarına 128 Kez Vergi ve Harç İndirimi Yapıldı*, (128 Tax Reductions were made for Cengiz, Limak, Kalyon, Kolin and Makyol), available here: <https://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/haber/cengiz-limak-kalyon-kolin-ve-makyol-firmalarina-128-kez-vergi-ve-harc-indirimi-yapildi-1801088>, last accessed on 01.01.2021.

<sup>778</sup> Öniş Ziya, "Turkey Under the Challenge of State Capitalism: The Political Economy of The Late AKP Era", *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, 2019, vol. 19, no.2, p. 201-225.

more lucrative tenders and likely be shielded from the consequences when its projects go south.”<sup>779</sup>

Subsequently, Erdoğan’s crony capitalism intensified favouritism, theft, waste of public money, inefficiency in the business processes and other forms of corruption, such as; direct and indirect bribery under AKP rule. As for the AKP, it needed loyal and dependent business groups in its authoritarian turn, and with the symbiotic relationship it formed with the groups that are primarily mentioned here, it remained in power. In other words, the greenhouse bourgeoisie that it created provided a vital component of sustainability for Erdoğan regime in its less-than-democratic period.

### iii. GONGOs AND CONGOs: *Domination of Civic Space*

In its authoritarian turn, the AKP wanted to be more assertive in the realm of civil society as an extension to its domination of political realm. To this end, the Party started establishing Government Organized NGOs (GONGOs) and supporting NGOs that are organized by religious communities (community organized NGOs, CONGOs), which are largely aimed at following three functions. First one is to *create information and conceptually legitimate its agenda*, the second is to *promote its discourse and policies*, and the third is to *counter-balance the oppositional actors of civil society*. Considering civil society as “a venue where several societal and political actors meet, interact, and discuss in order to arrive at a view all of them can live with”<sup>780</sup>, the AKP has wanted to *penetrate, crowd and eventually dominate* it, rather than completely shutting it down for dissident actors.

In terms of creation of information and conceptual legitimacy for AKP’s policies, Foundation for Political Economic and Social Research (SETA) sets the prime example. SETA strives to bring justification to the practices of the AKP from foreign policy to military incursions outside the country, and from the justice policies of the government to its management of finance. In its own self-definition, “the objective of SETA is to produce up-to-date and accurate knowledge and analyses in the fields of politics, economy and society and inform policy makers and the public on changing political, economic, social and cultural conditions. SETA evaluates national and international issues in an historical and cultural

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<sup>779</sup>Teoman Can, *A chronicle of crass cronyism in Turkey: The Demiroren Group*, PA Intelligence, 2019, available here: <https://www.paraanaliz.com/intelligence/a-chronicle-of-crass-cronyism-on-turkey-the-demiroren-group/>, last accessed on 01.01.2021.

<sup>780</sup>Heper Metin, Yıldırım Senem, (2011), *ibid.*



context.”<sup>781</sup> The “historical and cultural context” can fairly be taken as euphemism for the conservative outlook that it has in line with the AKP.

SETA has direct access to high ranking AKP officials and bureaucracy alongside media and private enterprises.<sup>782</sup> With around 100 employees and representation abroad, it is a large think tank with high expenses that does not disclose the sources of its funding. According to German intelligence, it is generously funded by Sadık Albayrak<sup>783</sup>, Erdoğan’s long comrade and owner of a loyal media group with pro-government television channels and dailies. With the content and perspective that it provides, SETA aims at dominating the field of strategy in Turkey and redefine national interests in the image of AKP leadership.

Turkey Youth and Education Services Foundation (TÜRGEV) and Women ad Democracy Association (KADEM) set examples to the civic initiatives established by AKP leadership. TÜRGEV was directly established by Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in 1996 when he was the mayor of Istanbul. After dormant years it changed its name into TÜRGEV and started expanding across the country and then beyond borders. The vision of TÜRGEV aims at “training young entrepreneur people, who know their history, themselves and their targets, who inquire, learn, produce”.<sup>784</sup> TÜRGEV has expanded fast in an effort to fill the vacuum created by the disarticulation of Gülen Movement in educational activities with schools, dormitories and a university. While Erdoğan’s daughter is a board member to the institution, the spouse of his communications director, serves as the chairwoman of it. KADEM defines itself as a “civil society organization engaged in advocacy in order to deliver women’s human dignity...Developing a social consciousness that the sharing of roles between men and women can only be realized by considering the balance between rights and responsibilities.”<sup>785</sup> The balance between rights and responsibilities is neither in line with modern equality-based understanding nor with the traditional one. In its advocacy work, KADEM carefully remains in conservative worldview with slight revisionism on gender roles in Turkey. For example it frames gender roles as “gender justice” rather than gender equality

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<sup>781</sup> See more information on SETA here: <https://www.setav.org/en/about/>, last accessed on 02.01.2021.

<sup>782</sup> Arin Kubilay, “Turkish Think Tanks, The AKP’S Policy Network From NeoGramscian and Neo-Ottoman Angles”, *Portland University Center for Turkish Studies Occasional Paper Series*, 2015, vol. 4, no. 1.

<sup>783</sup> DW, *Erdogan’s AKP Basks in Glow of Think Tank Financed by Influential Family, DW Finds*, available here: <https://www.dw.com/en/erdogans-akp-basks-in-glow-of-think-tank-financed-by-influential-family-dw-finds/a-51258757>, last accessed on 02.01.2021.

<sup>784</sup> See more information about TÜRGEV here, <https://turgev.org/en/sayfa/about-us/>, last checked on 02.01.2021.

<sup>785</sup> See more information about KADEM here: <https://kadem.org.tr/en/about-us/about-kadem/>, last accessed on 02.01.2021.

and remains staunchly opposed to LGBT rights. Erdoğan's other daughter, Sümeyye Erdoğan Bayraktar, is the vice chairwoman of this institution.

As for the funding of these associations, there is no transparency but, the existing persuasion places both of them in a position that relies directly or indirectly on public funding. When the AKP's candidate lost the elections, in local elections of 2019, the new mayor of the city cut the 62 million USD allocated from municipality's budget to TÜRGEV and similar AKP-affiliated NGOs. Consequently, TÜRGEV had to shut down more than half (25 out of 46) of its dormitories because of financial difficulties.<sup>786</sup> Another funding, most likely comes from "philanthropist business people" who are handpicked for extremely lucrative state tenders, in a manner of putting the corruption into work for AKP's NGOs. As it turns out to be a mutual win for Erdoğan leadership and the business people that are involved, this practice makes the general public lose, because, eventually it is the taxpayers who fund the pseudo-civilian activities of these institutions through public expenditure. As the public neither knows nor declares consent about this scheme of funding, it would be fair to argue that the GONGOs established by Erdoğan in his authoritarian turn are funded in shady and corrupt ways.

The faith-based organisations (FBOs), as religiously motivated charity initiatives, have proliferated under the AKP rule as the Party encouraged the public visibility of Islam and allocated funds and other facilitations for these organisations. As religiously motivated and run institutions, the FBOs share many similarities with the socio-political agenda of the AKP, who in turn, supports them in a symbiotic relationship. "FBO-state relations are defined on the basis of dependency, which manifests itself mostly through state incentives and government policies. The FBOs that align themselves with government policies work coherently with the latter and function to gain loyalty for the ruling party, which eventually targets winning elections."<sup>787</sup> In other words, the essential requirement for the FBOs to be granted public resources is aligning with government policies. Distributing social assistance, the FBOs create dependency and loyalty for the AKP government, and therefore, act as a tool of political patronage.

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<sup>786</sup>Duvar English, *Turkish Pro-gov't Foundation to Shut Some Dorms Over Shrinking of Funding by Opposition*, 2019, available here: <https://www.duvarenglish.com/politics/2020/06/08/turkish-pro-govt-foundation-to-shut-25-of-its-dorms-over-shrinking-of-funding-under-opposition-municipalities>, last accessed on 02.01.2021.

<sup>787</sup>Arslan Köse S., "Faith-based Organizations in Turkey as Indirect Political Patronage Tools", *Palgrave Communications*, 2019, vol. 5, no. 88, p.

The presence of Islamic organisations in the public space is far greater than FBOs and their charity work. The Sufi traditions (*tarikats*) and religious communities (*cemaats*) that flourished after the 1980 coup, that is, when the state released restrictions on their public presence, constitute a significant audience for Erdoğan.<sup>788</sup> “The AKP’s relations with religious communities are based on a policy of carrots and sticks. Accordingly, the AKP makes state resources available to some religious communities in exchange for their electoral support.”<sup>789</sup> Erdoğan’s position towards these Islamic communities can be framed as he is “for them” rather than “with them”. As a “publicly religious leader” he represents their hope and symbolizes their victory against the secularist establishment. On material basis, he grants buildings, funds and tax exempt status and similar legal advantages to their NGOs. For all the real and symbolic benefits some major religious communities publicly expressed their support in 2017 referendum and some critical elections. AKP’s influence on these communities can be framed as “co-optation” in political matters. While the AKP utilizes their existing network for outreach, the leaderships of these communities publicly align with the AKP for ideational and material benefits.

The last civic initiative that Erdoğan uses to dominate the civilian realm is the umbrella organisations that represent the NGOs and GONGOs exclusively in support of Erdoğan leadership. Civic Solidarity Platform (SDP) and National Will Platform (MİP) are primary examples of this initiative. The SDP comprises of around 500 NGOs that align with the AKP on socio-political matters and its chairman is officially an advisor to President Erdoğan. The Platform acts under direct control of Erdoğan and does not even fake a civic stance. The MİP, in its own expressions, was established to speak for “the national will” contra “parallel state”<sup>790</sup> at the end of 2013. In other words, it was founded by the AKP leadership to speak in a pseudo-civilian voice against the Gülen Movement. In brief, the AKP uses them like a boomerang. With the direct control that it has on these pseudo civilian organisations, the Party leadership sets an agenda, makes them to promote it and harvest what they promote as if it is a genuine support or demand from civil society.

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<sup>788</sup> According to a report prepared by Esergöl Balcı in 2018, there are 30 *tarikats* and *cemaats* that are active and organized. About 2,6 million people Express their affiliation to one of them. The largest *tarikats* is Naqshbandi with 4 major branches and the largest *cemaat* is the Nurcu group, which also has a multiplicity of sub-branches. Most of these communities have friendly relations with Erdoğan leadership and supported him in his fight against GM. See the details of the Report here: <https://www.dw.com/tr/t%C3%BCrkiyede-%C5%9Firketle%C5%9Fen-tarikat-ve-cemaatler/a-49885320>, last accessed on 03.01.2021.

<sup>789</sup> Çevik Salim, Erdoğan’s “Comprehensive Religious Policy Management of the Religious Realm in Turkey”, *Stiftung Wissenschaft un Politik*, 2019, no.12, p. 3.

<sup>790</sup> See more information about MİP here: <https://milliiradeplatformu.com/hakkimizda>, last accessed on 04.01.2021.

Alongside establishing, supporting and co-opting pseudo civilian initiatives to crowd and dominate the civic realm, the AKP exercises restrictions and prohibitions on the ones that are dissident. In other words, the AKP does not only establish and co-opt conservative NGOs (GONGOs) but also contains and annihilates the dissidents when it sees necessary.<sup>791</sup> The selective intervention into civil society is a typical practice in competitive authoritarian regimes since it allows a facade of democracy through allowing the docile, subordinated or unchallenging civil society activities while enabling the authorities punish the ones that bring challenge, that is, more authentic actors of civil society.

The dissident NGOs are restricted when they speak their demands and attempt to keep the government transparent and accountable. “A high number of CSOs raised this issue and expressed strong concern regarding the impact this had on their capacity to pursue their objectives, hold the state accountable and to remain fully independent or autonomous from the state... CSOs that did report interference by the state had previously opposed some state policy, and engaged in advocacy activities, thus suggesting that where CSOs are not seen as a threat to state power they are unrestricted.”<sup>792</sup> The AKP government, like in other regimes with authoritarian practices, frame the activities of demanding and independent civil society as threat and then exercise restrictions at various levels. In many cases the voice of civil society is silenced at an early stage in a manner that can be called “pre-emptive oppression”. Thus, the Party keeps the demands of civil society at bay, prevents assembly of the people that could challenge its practices and remain unaccountable, again, in a selective manner.

In many cases, terror charges have been used to oppress leftist, pro-Kurdish and Gülenist organisations, because it is very convenient to frame certain people as public enemy through terrorism. While the AKP has been selective in its oppression of leftist and pro-Kurdish organisations, it has annihilated the civic presence of Gülen Movement, as was explained in this chapter. As for gender advocacy (feminist or LGBT defenders) groups they are framed as threat to not only to the national culture but also to human nature altogether. While he had argued that LGBT rights must be protected in his early years in power, Erdoğan framed LGBT as a “condemned perversion”<sup>793</sup> in 2020 in line with his authoritarian turn. All

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<sup>791</sup>Yabancı Bilge, “Turkey’s tamed civil society: Containment and Appropriation under a Competitive Authoritarian Regime”, *Journal of Civil Society*, 2019, vol. 15, no. 4, p. 285-306.

<sup>792</sup> Doyle L. Jessica, “State Control of Civil Society Organizations: The Case of Turkey”, *Democratization*, 2017, vol.24, no. 2, p. 244-264.

<sup>793</sup>Yackley A. J., *Turkey’s LGBTQ Community at Risk Amid Rise in Homophobic Rhetoric*, Politico, 2020, <https://www.politico.eu/article/turkey-lgbtq-community-risk-rise-in-homophobic-rhetoric/>, last accessed on 04.01.2021.

in all, the securitization of civic space has been done in a strategic and selective manner lowering the overall democratic credentials of the country.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

This dissertation entitled, “From De-securitization to Re-securitization: *The Formation and Transformation of Turkey’s Justice and Development Party*” is an endeavour to frame an unprecedented effort to obtain power and an unrivalled effort to maintain it in Republican Turkish history; both happening through transformation, yet, in extremely different directionalities. Taking securitization as its organizing concept, this research has set out to encircle, probe into and offer an explanation on how the AKP has formed and transformed as a political party through changing its discourses, policies and alliances on the axis of securitization and remained in power. While the formation of the Party (AKP) took place through a rupture, the following transformation happened through continuity via radical changes. In other words, while the AKP was formed through a *paradigm change*, that is, from Islamism to conservative democracy, it remained in power through radical *retoolings* within conservatism which eventually ended up in “assertive conservatism” aided and abetted by nationalism.

Offering a consistent account of the two decades of AKP rule is a gargantuan work because of the dizzying multiplicity of its political positioning, alliances, manoeuvres, policies and discourses, which have often times astonished its supporters, caught its dissidents unprepared and got the scholars confused making them revisit their initial opinions later on. In order to carry out this rather Herculean task, one has to be familiar with the peculiarities of Turkish politics, such as its *sui generis* secularism, and well versed in its historical background since most of the ongoing debates are not younger than two centuries. The formation of Turkish public space in connection with identity policies of the state and the traumatic exclusions stemming from these policies create a corpus of “nuanced knowledge”. The peculiar nature of secularism (*laiklik*) which can be framed as management of religion in the ways that are distinct from the American and French traditions despite the fact that it was inspired by the latter must be recognized alongside the fact that the role that Islam vis a vis this *laiklik* has always been an important grounds of political contestation in Turkey. A further challenge was posed by Erdoğan’s leadership style which successfully transitioned from Islamism to conservatism and navigated within the conservative reservoir utilizing the transitivity between nationalism, conservatism and Islamism at an unprecedented level, perhaps with the help of his trans-paradigmatic charisma. His acumen has primarily manifested through an infusion of Islamist and (later) nationalist content into his conservative discourse, in which, he eventually ended up redefining the Turkish conservatism.

Upon a nuanced knowledge on idiosyncratic components of Turkish political space, a rich box of conceptual tools that are put together in a consistent manner was necessary for this thesis. *Securitization* was chosen as the main axis of evaluation as it has been the constant element of Turkish public and political space in terms of ethnic, religious and cultural identity and lifestyle. Securitization, then, was tripled with *Agonism* to frame the struggle-oriented nature of Turkish politics and *Critical Discourse Analysis* to put the discourse together with power relations in its analysis. As explained in the theoretical part of the thesis, these three fields are responsive to each other and function very well in a *Constructivist* framework, which offers a suitable approach to examine leader driven political phenomenon that utilizes culture, identity and social values to run its processes; just like Erdoğan and his Party.

Along the way the author of the thesis got inspired by the rich conceptual toolbox that he used and at times he felt the necessity to offer new ones. One of them is “**necessity space**” in connection with the broadly used concept of “opportunity space”. Necessity space involves the structures of political necessity, positions and messages of political agents and the overall political psychology of the public. While the opportunity space is primarily exploited on the basis of improvement, the necessity space is largely exploited on the basis of survival; therefore, they have different directionalities. The other concept offered in the thesis is informed by Michel Foucault’s “technologies of the self”. The author has a strong conviction that there is need to frame the set of tools (including all the political, discursive and institutional means) and habitus (the thought, position and actions of the relevant agent) that are utilized to create and maintain a certain mode of order and the concept of “**technologies of securitization**” properly corresponds to this need. Technologies of securitization co-extend with modalities of exclusion (elaborated in the theoretical part of the thesis) because in the essence securitization is an act of partial or total exclusion of certain groups, individuals and processes from normal (legitimate) functioning. Furthermore, these technologies may be utilized in moderate and continuous manner or in sudden and severe fashion. For any technology, -be it discourse, policy or administrative act- to be continuous it has to be a systemic element, that is to say, it has to be acknowledged as a norm regardless of being *de facto* or *de jure*. This can perhaps be called “securitization through normal means of politics” in a specific spatio-temporal setting; therefore, the author suggests that it is a “**chronic securitization**”. The “**acute securitization**” on the other hand is severe and sudden like military interventions as they come and go abruptly yet may leave permanent effects on the political system.

As puzzling as it was, the examination of AKP stands as an imperative since neither the past two decades nor the coming years (with or without it being in power) of Turkey and its close neighbourhood could be comprehended without its role. Following politics of conservative democracy in its de-securitizing period and assertive conservatism in its re-securitizing period the AKP utilized and exploited the reservoir of conservative values and indicated that these values could be used for and against democracy depending on the will and capacity of the exploiter. Since the AKP has also changed the power structure of the state in important ways as it transformed, its evaluation showcases the mutual structuration of agency and structure which reached the point of *subordinating the structure to the agency* of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. It also indicated that Turkish conservatism has chunky overlaps with Islamism and nationalism, and enjoys the capacity of harmonizing them through the persona of the leader. At the international level, a comprehensive examination of Erdoğan and the AKP would provide not only experience-based perspective into studies on conservatism but also offer valuable knowledge on populist leadership and their tendency to go authoritarian and override the systemic constraints. In this regard this study would have resonance elsewhere in the world as the populism has been on the rise for quite some time.

This thesis also offered a viewpoint into alliance-making at political and bureaucratic level through AKP's fights with the secularist establishment and the Gülen Movement (GM) respectively. Explaining how the AKP has first allied with the GM for its onslaught on the secularist establishment and later allied with the remains of the secularist establishment for its final attack on the GM, the thesis offers how such alliances that are self-contradicting on a chronological basis would function under a strong leadership and extensive control over media. Regarding AKP's relations with the GM, the thesis also shows that a symbiotic relationship could turn overtly antagonistic as the common enemy against whom the symbiosis was constructed ceases to exist. Starting from AKP's crackdown on Gezi protests to Kurds and finally the Gülenists, the thesis showcases how the processes of securitization in its various ways become possible through a huge monopoly on media and state machinery. At least as equally importantly the thesis discloses how each practice of securitization hosts a threat for democratic rights.

In brief, the broad inquiry of this research was broken down to its constituent parts as follows:



- What were the underlying factors for the AKP to de-securitize Turkish politico-legal structure in its initial years in the government? What were the opportunity structures that facilitated de-securitization and how did the Party elite utilize them?
- What domestic and international factors initially fomented a pro-Western foreign policy for the AKP and what others later reversed it?
- How did the AKP employ and utilize Islamic values in its discourse? How did it infuse its post-Islamist discourse with the discourse of center-right, and cross-breed it with nationalism?
- What interplays can be identified between the shifts of AKP's discourse and its changing alliances? How did it manage to partner with and then fully antagonize the Gülen Movement and maintain its power position? How did it change the antagonistic relations that it had with the secularist bureaucracy into alliance against the Gülenists? How did it de-securitize and then re-securitize the Kurdish issue?
- How did the Party initially co-habitate, yet, eventually disarticulate the tutelary bureaucracy, that is to say, the secularist establishment of Turkey and dominate the political space?

At the outset of this research, following hypotheses were offered: 1- In the absence of ideological loyalty to the main pillars of Turkish Republic, secularism and nationalism, the AKP has de-securitized the public space for conservative Muslims and the Kurds, who had been pushed to periphery by old the Republican elite. This consolidated the voter base of the party and legitimated it in the eyes of domestic and international powerhouses. 2- Upon consolidation of power, the Party allied with the Gülen Movement (GM) in a marriage of convenience and disarticulated the tutelary bureaucratic establishment of the country in a few years. After the disarticulation, the AKP started going authoritarian on the face of crises of their own making which were; secular civil protests (Gezi), pro-Kurdish politics and the GM, its former ally. As the Party has never been essentially democratic or authoritarian, the authoritarian turn that it had after 2011 was about survival in power, just like the reforms that it conducted in its first decade. 3- Initially infusing discursive elements of Islamism into conservatism, Erdoğan later added nationalism to his narrative and established a discursive domination alongside the political one. With a charismatic persona, a fluid discourse and an effective oppression of the opposition, Erdoğan changed his allies as he needed and survived in power. 4- Foreign policy options, specifically in the relations with the West and the Middle

East were chosen to fit the domestic needs of the Party, which also reflected its alliance formations in the domestic power struggle.

In order to test these hypotheses the thesis was designed to collect data on the transformation of the AKP on the axis of securitization from primary and secondary sources. The major sources of data were discursive venues: While the election manifestos, banners, posters, and the speeches that were delivered at election rallies, in the Parliament and press conferences were used as major discursive venues of the study, two things stood out as relevant facts: First, the prevalence of video usage as the data source increased chronologically. Second, in line with the incremental personalization of power in Erdoğan, he has become the only figure within the Party organization that bore political significance and the thesis –inevitably– focused more exclusively on what he has said and done in the second decade of the AKP rule. Alongside these discursive venues, Constitutional and legislative amendments and administrative changes were used as primary sources too as they constituted the systemic and institutional basis of securitization practices. Another set of primary source for the research was the surveys, statistics and rankings offered by international NGOs that are active and offer measurements in specific fields. The data obtained from these primary sources was then evaluated in the context of vast and growing academic literature on the AKP and the reports of relevant international bodies, primarily the EU.

The findings of this study started with the pre-AKP period via its examination of historical background and suggest that Turkish Republic has shaped its public space in its formative years (1923-1938) through exclusions of large ethnic and religious groups (Kurds, non-Muslim, conservative Muslims etc.), who constitute the majority in society, from full representation using various technologies of securitization that span from normal (not necessarily democratic) functioning of state apparatuses to military interventions. As the organized political dissidence to this design of public space became possible with the transition into multi-party regime in 1950, the founding mentality (which never morphed into an ideology) was retreated back to state bureaucracy as the electoral political space was dominated by conservative centre-right parties. The secularist bureaucracy, then went through retoolings (established new institutions), such as, National Security Council, High Education Council and National Security Courts and utilized its domination in Turkish Armed Forces and high judiciary to exercise its intervention into civilian politics. This created a *balance of power* in Turkey where the government institutions are largely determined by conservative parties and state bureaucracy was dominated by the secularist establishment.

AKP came to power with re-orientation of its leading cadres from Islamism to conservative democracy that involved *coercion* and *consent*. While the closure of the previous Islamist parties by the secularist establishment constituted the element of coercion, the dissolution of centre-right conservatism in 1990s presented an opportunity space and constituted the element of consent to go from Islamism to conservatism. In this period EU's reform demands for prospect membership fell in line with the interests of the AKP. That is to say both aimed at removing bureaucratic tutelage, yet, for different reasons. While the EU wanted to get Turkish democracy harmonized with the EU standards, the AKP wanted to expand its sphere of authority at the expense of a controlling bureaucracy. The reform agenda was existential for the AKP to *contain* and *disarticulate the tutelary bureaucratic establishment* and consolidate its power position. Disarticulation of bureaucratic tutelage has been done through expansion of public space which co-extended with de-securitization of issues. Therefore, de-securitization was an existential political framework for the Party, yet, it was not essential because the Party would give up on this agenda and re-securitize the public space to unprecedented levels after it consolidated in power.

After gaining the pro-democracy framed momentum in its struggle with the secularist establishment, the only counter powerhouse in the country, the AKP stalled the reforms and made them into subjects to cost-benefit calculations as there was no pushing demand from its electorate towards the end of 2000s. Forming a symbiotic relationship with the GM, the AKP used Movement's resources in media, civil society and more importantly in bureaucracy to attack the establishment in the heart, Turkish Armed Forces through *Ergenekon* and *Balyoz* cases and imprisoned many high ranking officers including the chief of general staff of the time. With the Constitutional referendum of 2010, the Party reconfigured the membership of the high judiciary and subordinated it to the executive via the new appointment system, again with the help of GM. On the Kurdish issue, which constituted a key matter on AKP's reform agenda, Erdoğan employed a rather fluctuating discourse. Having declared the Kurdish Opening in 2009 to overcome the 'Kurdish Issue' in an official framing, he rejected the very framing of his own making in 2011 claiming that the issue has been resolved and what has remained was the terrorism of the PKK. All in all, by the summer of 2011, Erdoğan had exposed and imprisoned prominent members of the military wing of establishment through *Ergenekon* and *Balyoz* cases and staffed the high judiciary with his loyalists, practically ending the secularist domination in high bureaucracy.

Having disarticulated the secularist establishment (circa 2011), the AKP did not need democratic reforms or reconciliatory policies anymore, and in line with that, the Erdoğan leadership incrementally grew assertive and authoritarian declaring many groups as threat and limiting the exercise of basic rights and freedoms for them. In this period, Erdoğan polarized the society through every possible debate, antagonized its former symbiotic partner; the Gülenists, followed exclusionary policies towards non-conservative groups, specifically the ones that were actively involved in Gezi protests, and eventually re-framed the Kurdish issue as a matter of national security, reversing the agenda of his reformist years. Transforming a peaceful protest into an outburst of oppositional activism in Gezi, he, then portrayed the protestors as a *symbolic threat* to conservative values and collaborators of external powers who conspire against Turkey and utilized the past agonies of his supporters (regardless of being real or perceived) in a context of *competitive victimhood*. Excluding the Gezi protestors in legal, moral and administrative means, Erdoğan, then, crafted the concept of “New Turkey” as a political expression of his assertive conservatism which reflected through the concept of “native and national” in the socio-cultural space. Upon the December 17 corruption investigations that forced 4 ministers of his cabinet to resign, Erdoğan claimed that it was a judicial coup attempt by the Gülenist members of law enforcement, disbanded the investigation team and reshuffled thousands of people within judiciary and police. In a short while after the investigations, Erdoğan called the GM as a “parallel state” implying its influence in state bureaucracy (which he used a few years ago against the secularist establishment) and shut down the huge media outlets run by the Movement. In a few years, Erdoğan has effectively securitized its key ally and silenced them.

As explained in the last Chapter, Erdoğan’s crackdown on dissidence in the aftermath of the failed coup attempt (2016) brought unprecedented levels of securitization with the practices of State of Emergency that lasted 2 years. Securitization was selective in this period like the previous ones and primarily targeted the GM and Kurdish politics. Accusing the Gülen Movement for masterminding and executing the failed coup, he framed his former partner as a terrorist organisation (FETO) and *annihilated it* with all its social and human capital, and completed the centralization of power in his persona. The OHAL and more specifically statutory laws enabled him to by-pass the Parliamentary check and exercise “rule-by-decree”. With the presidential system, he reconfigured the power structure of the state as he pleased. Constituting the simple majority in the Parliament with its partner; MHP, Erdoğan’s AKP could legislate as it saw fit and therefore, control both the executive and

legislative branches of the state alongside the judiciary which had already been put under Erdoğan's control. Thus, it would be fair to claim, if anything defines the political mind of Erdoğan it is the presidential system that he brought; because, he had no bureaucratic, political or whatsoever hindrances in this transition. As the presidential system has become possible in alliance with MHP in Parliamentary vote and the following referendum, and AKP's survival in power is strongly tied to MHP's support, the latter was framed in this thesis as "strategic enabler and limiter" for the former. As for the Kurdish issue, Erdoğan had the rather popular leader of pro-Kurdish HDP, Selahattin Demirtaş, arrested, alongside many others in the Party's leadership, assigned trustees to tens of municipalities that were won by pro-Kurdish politicians in local elections, including cities and arrested many academics (Academic for Peace) who called for a peaceful solution of the issue.

The overall execution of this dissertation was not devoid of pitfalls. Initially multiple in-depth interviews about the overall effects of the failed coup were planned with scholarly figures from different walks of political spectrum. As it would not be possible to do that in Turkey in the close aftermath of the coup, the author planned it to do in Europe, primarily in France and Germany, yet he was prevented from leaving the country and the interviews fell off the research agenda. Another problem pertains to obtaining healthy information on the Gülen Movement as they remained evasive on debated issues, such as; the Movement's allegedly organized presence in bureaucracy and the political aspirations that they had. Given the lack of a mass discourse and the formation of a political party, it would be fair to assume that the GM had no grand strategy other than a thirst for constant growth in line with its capitalism-friendly nature. A third point in the shortcomings of this thesis lies with the level of analysis: Since it focused on the formation and transformation of the AKP, it laid the emphasis on domestic politics, yet, analyses of certain issues such as Turkish military presence in Northern Iraq and Syria would complement the overall evaluation on the securitization of the Kurdish issue. Another point that was left less-than-clear is the current condition of the secularist establishment. The thesis acknowledged that they ceased to exist as an effective domination structure as of 2011 and it has proved correct so far that they have not exhibited any intervention into Erdoğan-dominated civilian politics after this date. However, as the verdicts in *Ergenekon* and *Balyoz* cases came in favour of the defendants as early as 2015 and most of them were re-assigned to active positions. Furthermore, since AKP's partner, MHP, has transitivity with the secularist establishment in bureaucracy, the secularist establishment could be going through some kind of regeneration in the opaque universe of

Turkish bureaucracy. As these structures do not exist in an official stature, certainty about their status will be acquired when and if they intervene into politics. Yet another drawback for this dissertation is that it is devoid of offering a foresight into what is likely to happen in the near future of the country as it is near-impossible to envisage the discourse and policy re-orientations of Erdoğan leadership. Since the AKP is still in power by the time this thesis is finalized the examination of its transformation inevitably renders less-than-complete. However, this study is justified on two fronts: First, it is not possible to discern the AKP's possible future time in power, therefore it bears scientific value as an examination of AKP's formation and transformation that has happened until April 2021. Second, it bears value as an attempt to capture the transformation through the lens of a real-time witness and pass it on to similar future studies.

During the course of this study, transition into presidential system took place and winning more than 50% was made the primary condition of being establishing the government. This was unexpected as Erdoğan created a dependency on his ally MHP much more than any leader would want to. Considering the fluid alliances that he had in the past with GM and the secularist establishment, it was not expected that Erdoğan would go into such a binding alliance. Perhaps, he reckoned that the opposition would never be able to form a working election coalition and compete with his power bloc, but they did and won big time in the local elections of 2019.

As of thesis was being finalized (February 2021), no significant attempt has been made from the AKP to establish anything that resembles an Islamic state or Sharia rule proving many secularist sceptics and international analysts who ignored the *sui generis* nature of Turkish politics wrong. As framed in one of the hypotheses of this research, the AKP had done away from Islamism permanently and moved forward exploiting the much broader opportunities of Turkish conservatism. If Erdoğan had any intention of introducing something like that, he would have done it in during the state of emergency following the coup attempt, that is, when he practically exercised unchecked power.

As of this thesis was being finalized AKP's journey in power was going on in alliance with its last partner, MHP, in a happy marriage of convenience that continues on the grounds of competitive authoritarianism. While Turkey came 107<sup>th</sup> out of 128 countries in the Rule of Law Index of World Justice Project, it ranked 124<sup>th</sup> in the category of constraints on the

government and 123<sup>th</sup> in the category of fundamental rights.<sup>794</sup> Freedom House currently frames the Erdoğan government as “authoritarian” and ranks Turkey as “not free” in its overall evaluations and again “not free” in the category of Freedom on the Net in its 2020 evaluations.<sup>795</sup> Human Rights Watch 2021 Report starts with the expressions that “The assault on human rights and the rule of law presided over by Turkey’s President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan continued during the Covid-19 pandemic”, and underlines the ongoing executive control over the judiciary. Mentioning journalists, activists and HDP leadership as the people targeted by Erdoğan’s AKP, the report mentions the Gülenists as the largest group oppressed by the government.<sup>796</sup>

However the support for the AKP-MHP alliance has been eroding to the point that 25% of the people believe that the country is changing for the better at the backdrop of 60% who believe the opposite is the case. While the support for the Erdoğan leadership is around 37%, the opposition secures 43% rendering 19% of the electorate, undecided.<sup>797</sup> The significant amount of undecided voter is primarily related to the weak economic performance, and being in full realization of that, Erdoğan changed the chairman of Central Bank and minister of Treasury and Finance who replacing his son-in-law. In order to avoid conflict with the newly-elected Joe Biden administration in the US and the EU sanctions that would be decided in March 2021 as well as to attract much needed foreign investment, Erdoğan started mentioning possible reforms but neither his leadership could remain in power on the face of democracy and rule of law in the country nor his more nationalist partner MHP would allow any significant compromise on security-oriented discourse and policies of the power bloc.

Another restraint on the manoeuvrability of Erdoğan is the formation of two new parties by prominent former cabinet members of his governments; Future Party by Ahmet Davutoğlu and Democracy and Progress Party by Ali Babacan. With their positive growth trend and culturally conservative policies, these two parties further ended Erdoğan’s monopoly on conservative politics alongside the nationalist İP. All thingsa< considered,

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<sup>794</sup>See for other categories of the WJP’s Turkey assessment here: <https://worldjusticeproject.org/rule-of-law-index/country/2020/Turkey/Fundamental%20Rights/>, last accessed on 22.02.2021.

<sup>795</sup>See for details of 2020 country report of Turkey by Freedom Huse at: <https://freedomhouse.org/country/turkey/freedom-world/2020>, last accessed on 22.02.2021.

<sup>796</sup>See for the Turkey part of World Report 2021 by HRW at: <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2021/country-chapters/turkey>, last accessed on 22.02.2021.

<sup>797</sup>See for the details of the poll conducted in February 2021 here: <https://tr.sputniknews.com/turkiye/202102161043818662-metropoll-arastirma-iktidarinin-oy-orani-yuzde-372-muhalefetin-yuzde-43-ve-kararsizlar-yuzde-186/>, last accessed on 22.02.2021.

Erdođan is trapped in a conservatism that is unprecedentedly nationalistic and security oriented and how much longer he stays in power has yet to be seen.



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## Résumé en français

Les analystes et les universitaires de la Turquie ont fréquemment observé que pendant la première et la deuxième décennie des années 2000, le pays a suivi des lignes de politique et de discours plutôt inconciliables et souvent fondamentalement contradictoires. La dernière décennie du dernier millénaire était chargée de fluctuations économiques et de troubles politiques, mais la Turquie s'est mise à se réformer au début des années 2000 sous le gouvernement du Parti de la justice et du développement (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*, qui sera dorénavant cité comme AKP) dirigé par Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. Les réformes primordiales qui ont été menées pendant les premières années du gouvernement AKP ont été reconnues par des universitaires, des institutions de contrôle (les ONG internationales) et l'Union européenne ayant suivi de près la Turquie pour sa candidature à l'adhésion et ayant publié des rapports de progression sur la compatibilité globale avec les normes et les principes de l'Union européenne. Alors que *Freedom House* a qualifié les réformes de la Turquie datant de 2004 de monumentales, Amnesty International a applaudi les réformes juridiques de 2004 et de 2005 qui ont rapproché le droit turc des normes internationales.

Les grandes réformes de cette période (l'extension des droits et des libertés civiques malgré les problèmes persistants de leur mise en œuvre, la réduction de l'influence des militaires – des Forces armées turques, *TSK* – sur la politique civile, l'assouplissement de la mise en œuvre affirmée et restrictive de la laïcité, le démantèlement du monopole de *TSK* sur la question kurde et son transfert même partiel au domaine de la politique civile et la construction d'une politique étrangère orientée vers la réconciliation) peuvent être commodément encadrées dans le concept de désécurisation. La Turquie a été présentée comme un pays modèle pour le Moyen-Orient et le monde musulman plus vaste dans la phase réformiste du gouvernement AKP qui s'est poursuivie jusqu'en 2011 malgré un sérieux assouplissement.

Cependant, à partir de 2011, la Turquie a commencé à montrer des signes de recul en matière de légitimité démocratique alors que l'AKP se consolidait au pouvoir et commençait à mettre en œuvre des politiques autoritaires affirmatives et sélectives. Il n'y a pas de consensus unanime parmi les universitaires sur la temporisation de la dérive de l'AKP vers des pratiques autoritaires, c'est-à-dire lorsque les politiques de l'AKP ont commencé à changer. Néanmoins, pour de nombreux universitaires, la période d'après 2011 a surtout été marquée par le rejet et le renversement de la période réformiste au cours de laquelle les détériorations sont devenues

particulièrement visibles en matière d'État de droit et de protection des droits et des libertés fondamentaux. En d'autres termes, un « État de sécurité » a commencé à apparaître lorsque l'AKP a commencé à inverser les réformes qu'il avait menées.

Cette thèse examine les raisons sous-jacentes et l'agencement des changements fondamentaux que l'AKP a subis par rapport au concept de « sécurisation ». Le concept est promu par l'école de Copenhague qui propose une nouvelle approche plaçant les choix faits dans l'élaboration des politiques au centre des politiques de sécurité plutôt que des faits présumés indépendants des intérêts des décideurs politiques. Dans le cas des changements que la Turquie a parcourus sous la direction de Recep Tayyip Erdoğan et du gouvernement AKP, l'approche de sécurisation comblerait une lacune dans la littérature vu qu'elle reconnaît les intérêts changeants de l'élite au pouvoir de manière flexible et qu'elle analyse les politiques en tant que telles. Cette étude suit une séquence de périodisation comme suit : 2002-2007 ; période de sécurisation, 2007-2011 ; consolidation du pouvoir et stagnation de sécurisation ; 2011-2016, période de resécurisation et d'autoritarisme compétitif, 2016-2021 ; intensification de la resécurisation et de la domination systémique. La transformation de l'AKP s'explique par les opportunités et les nécessités auxquelles il a dû faire face et par les réponses que sa direction a apportées afin de survivre au pouvoir durant ces périodes.

### **Comprendre la transformation de l'AKP : Une tâche herculéenne**

Au long des deux décennies du règne d'Erdoğan, la multiplicité conflictuelle du positionnement politique, des alliances, des manœuvres, des politiques et des discours de l'AKP a souvent étonné ses partisans, a pris ses dissidents de court et a semé la confusion chez les universitaires en les obligeant à revoir leurs opinions initiales. Une riche boîte d'outils conceptuels utilisés dans une multiplicité d'approches structurées de manière flexible est nécessaire afin d'expliquer la formation et la transformation de l'AKP. Pour bien mener cette tâche plutôt herculéenne, il est important de connaître les particularités du politique turc et son contexte historique étant donné que la plupart des débats en cours ont leurs racines dans l'ère de la modernisation.

Comprendre les deux décennies du gouvernement AKP en Turquie signifie avant tout reconnaître le rôle que l'Islam joue dans la vie sociopolitique car celui-ci il a été utilisé dans le but d'atteindre le pouvoir et a été exploité pour le maintenir durant le règne d'Erdoğan. L'Islam se manifeste de différentes manières dans la vie sociopolitique et présente de différentes formations, c'est-à-dire des interprétations officielles et non officielles, et le plus



important, il joue un rôle particulier dans la légitimation de l'État républicain tout en étant simultanément réduit par celui-ci. Les réponses fournies par l'État sont particulièrement importantes pour cette thèse car elles ont constitué le fondement principal et durable de la sécurisation dans le domaine public, ce qui a été expliqué en détail dans le contexte historique de notre travail.

Ayant abandonné l'Islam politique de manière autoproclamée, Erdoğan a toujours insufflé des sentiments islamiques dans sa politique et son discours et ainsi il a recréé le centre-droit d'une manière culturellement conservatrice. Comme sa mentalité politique a été exclusivement façonnée dans la tradition islamiste, mais qu'il est passé d'abord au centre-droit puis au nationalisme, une analyse approfondie sur l'Islam politique, la politique de centre-droit et la politique nationaliste en Turquie est nécessaire pour encadrer le mouvement d'Erdoğan. La formation même de l'AKP représente un changement de paradigme par rapport à l'Islam politique et son repositionnement constant dans la politique de centre-droit a eu lieu par le biais de réajustements, ce qui apporte un pouvoir explicatif important dans l'analyse de la transformation du parti.

Une autre difficulté se pose dans le style de leadership d'Erdoğan. Révélant le pragmatisme toujours « vert » d'Erdoğan et exposant les mécanismes complexes qui soutiennent les changements en douceur qu'il a effectués dans le discours, la politique et les alliances nécessitent une approche à plusieurs niveaux. Si l'on y ajoute les navigations mentionnées au sein du réservoir conservateur, les formations d'alliances doivent être analysées en même temps que les changements discursifs et politiques. Sa domination d'abord sur l'AKP, puis sur l'électorat et enfin sur l'ensemble de l'appareil d'État, et l'érosion des institutions qui a accompagné cette domination, nécessitent que l'analyse de la transformation de l'AKP se fasse à travers son leadership.

Ensuite, il y a aussi la question de laïcité *sui generis* de la Turquie. Lors de sa fondation en 1923, la République turque avait hérité d'une mentalité d'État qui utilisait la religion (plus précisément l'Islam) et la subordonnait à la volonté politique. Comme l'explique le contexte historique de notre travail, la pratique turque de laïcité peut être simplement considérée comme la gestion du domaine religieux par l'État ou le contrôle de l'État sur la religion et ses manifestations. Lorsque l'AKP est arrivé au pouvoir, la laïcité turque était confinée dans un « repli agressif » qu'elle avait perdu sa capacité à résoudre les problèmes tout en essayant de contraindre les gens à adopter un certain mode de vie. La cohabitation

initiale de l'AKP avec les milieux laïques de la République et les négociations constantes, puis la subordination qui s'en est suivie entre les forces laïques et un programme résolument conservateur mais pas encore islamiste constituent un élément clé de l'axe de la sécurisation. Ainsi, les complexités de la laïcité turque et les interactions de l'AKP avec et à travers elle créent une complexité qui ne peut être ignorée pour notre travail.

Pour résumer, l'évaluation de la transformation de l'AKP est un travail ambitieux qui est nécessaire pour comprendre la Turquie d'aujourd'hui. La cohabitation initiale d'Erdoğan avec des puissances laïques, les marchandages constants et l'expansion de son influence et la domination qui s'ensuit sur ces dernières nécessitent des analyses séparées de ses relations avec elles dans un ordre chronologique. Sur la base du langage politique, son départ de l'Islam politique, l'infusion de ses éléments politiques dans le centre-droit et, dernièrement, l'incorporation du nationalisme dans son discours exigent une approche souple mais cohérente. Les relations d'alliance et d'inimitié avec les gülenistes, les Kurdes et la bureaucratie laïque nécessitent des analyses de processus qui impliquent dans chaque cas la mise en évidence des intérêts d'Erdoğan et l'extraction des forces qu'il a mises en mouvement en conséquence. Notre travail vise à offrir une analyse complète de la formation et de la transformation de l'AKP en tenant compte de ces défis et en les abordant dans un cadre théoriquement cohérent.

## **Hypothèses et Méthode**

L'enquête générale de cette recherche a été divisée en cinq parties constitutives suivantes :

- Quels étaient les facteurs sous-jacents à la désécurisation de la structure politico-juridique turque par l'AKP au cours de ses premières années au gouvernement ? Quelles étaient les structures d'opportunité et comment l'élite du parti les a-t-elle utilisées ?
- Quelles sont les interactions entre les changements du discours de l'AKP et ses alliances en évolution ? Comment a-t-il réussi à s'associer au mouvement Gülen, puis à s'en prendre totalement à lui et à maintenir sa position de pouvoir ? Comment a-t-il transformé les relations antagonistes qu'il entretenait avec la bureaucratie laïque en une alliance contre les Gülenistes ? Comment a-t-il procédé à la désécurisation et à la resécurisation de la question kurde ?

- Comment l'AKP a-t-il employé et utilisé les valeurs islamiques dans son discours ? Comment a-t-il infusé son discours post-islamiste dans le discours de centre-droit, l'a-t-il croisé avec le nationalisme et créé l'interdiscursivité ?
- Comment l'AKP a-t-il survécu à des crises majeures et créé des états d'exception, comment a-t-il justifié populairement ses politiques peu démocratiques qui ont restreint les droits et libertés fondamentaux et mis en place une censure et un contrôle sans précédent sur les médias ?
- Quels facteurs nationaux et internationaux ont renversé la politique étrangère initialement pro-occidentale de l'AKP ?

Ces questions visaient à mettre au jour les relations et les dynamiques de pouvoir entre l'AKP et les autres acteurs du système politique et de l'établissement bureaucratique turc qui ont suivi et ont parfois été éclipsées par les débats sur les normes et les valeurs politiques. En examinant simultanément la législation, l'élaboration des politiques et le discours, notre travail s'est efforcée d'apporter une analyse intégrée avec une approche multidimensionnelle. Partant du principe qu'une analyse cohérente ne peut être construite que du point de vue des relations de pouvoir, le travail présent a évalué la politique pro-démocratique et autoritaire de l'AKP sur la base des relations de pouvoir. Sans remettre en cause les changements juridiques, notre étude mettra l'accent sur la façon dont la dérive autoritaire a été justifiée par la population au moyen de techniques de gestion de la perception, indépendamment de leurs références démocratiques.

Au début de cette recherche, les hypothèses suivantes ont été proposées : 1- En l'absence de loyauté idéologique aux principaux piliers de la République turque, la laïcité et le nationalisme, l'AKP a désécurisé le domaine public pour les musulmans conservateurs et les Kurdes, qui avaient été poussés à la périphérie par la vieille élite républicaine. Cela a consolidé la base électorale du parti et l'a légitimé aux yeux des grandes puissances nationales et internationales. 2- Après la consolidation du pouvoir, le Parti s'est allié au Mouvement Gülen (MG) dans un mariage de convenance et il a désarticulé l'établissement bureaucratique tutélaire du pays en quelques années. Après la désarticulation, l'AKP a commencé à devenir autoritaire face aux crises qu'il a lui-même provoquées, à savoir les manifestations civiles laïques (Gezi), la politique pro-kurde et le MG, son ancien allié. Comme le parti n'a jamais été essentiellement démocratique ou autoritaire, le virage autoritaire qu'il a pris après 2011 était une question de survie au pouvoir, tout comme les réformes qu'il a menées au cours de sa

première décennie. 3- Infusant initialement des éléments discursifs de l'islamisme dans le conservatisme, Erdoğan a ensuite ajouté le nationalisme à son récit et a établi une domination discursive à côté de la domination politique. Avec un personnage charismatique, un discours fluide et une oppression efficace de l'opposition, Erdoğan a changé ses alliés au fur et à mesure de ses besoins et a survécu au pouvoir. 4- Les options de politique étrangère, en particulier les relations avec l'Occident et le Moyen-Orient, ont été choisies pour répondre aux besoins intérieurs du Parti, qui reflétait également ses formations d'alliance dans la lutte pour le pouvoir intérieur.

Afin de tester ces hypothèses, notre travail a été conçu pour recueillir des données sur la transformation de l'AKP sur l'axe de la sécurisation à partir des sources primaires et secondaires. Les principales sources de données étaient des lieux discursifs : Alors que les manifestes électoraux, les banderoles, les affiches et les discours prononcés lors des rassemblements électoraux, ont été utilisés comme principaux lieux discursifs de l'étude au Parlement et lors des conférences de presse, deux choses sont ressorties comme des faits pertinents : Premièrement, la prévalence de l'utilisation de la vidéo comme source de données a augmenté chronologiquement. Deuxièmement, conformément à la personnalisation progressive avec le pouvoir, Erdoğan est devenu la seule figure au sein de l'organisation du parti, ce qui a eu une signification politique et notre travail s'est concentrée plus inévitablement et exclusivement sur ce qu'il a dit et ce qu'il a fait dans la deuxième décennie du règne de l'AKP. Parallèlement à ces lieux discursifs, les amendements constitutionnels et législatifs et les changements administratifs ont également été utilisés comme sources primaires du fait qu'ils constituaient la base systémique et institutionnelle des pratiques de sécurisation. Les enquêtes, les statistiques et les classements proposés par les ONG internationales actives dans des domaines spécifiques ont également servi de sources primaires pour la recherche. Les données obtenues à partir de ces sources primaires ont ensuite été évaluées dans le contexte d'une vaste littérature académique croissante sur l'AKP et des rapports des organismes internationaux concernés, principalement ceux de l'Union européenne.

## **Résultats**

Les résultats de cette étude, qui a débuté avec la période pré-AKP par l'examen du contexte historique, suggèrent que la République turque a façonné son domaine public au cours de ses années de formation (1923-1938) en excluant de grands groupes ethniques et

religieux (Kurdes, non-musulmans, musulmans conservateurs, etc.) qui ont constitué la majorité de la société, de la pleine représentation au moyen de diverses technologies de sécurisation qui vont du fonctionnement normal (pas nécessairement démocratique) des appareils d'État aux interventions militaires. Lorsque la dissidence politique organisée à l'égard de cette conception du domaine public est devenue possible avec la transition vers le régime multipartite en 1950, la mentalité fondatrice (qui ne s'est jamais transformée en idéologie) a été ramenée à la bureaucratie étatique, le domaine politique électoral étant dominé par les partis conservateurs de centre-droit. La bureaucratie laïque a ensuite été réorganisée, elle a créé de nouvelles institutions comme le Conseil de sécurité nationale, le Conseil supérieur de l'éducation et les tribunaux de sécurité nationale. Elle a aussi utilisé sa domination sur les forces armées turques et le pouvoir judiciaire pour intervenir dans la politique civile. Cela a créé un équilibre des pouvoirs en Turquie où les institutions gouvernementales sont largement déterminées par les partis conservateurs et où la bureaucratie étatique était dominée par l'établissement séculaire.

L'AKP est arrivé au pouvoir avec une réorientation de ses cadres dirigeants de l'islamisme vers une démocratie conservatrice qui impliquait la coercition et le consentement. Alors que la fermeture des précédents partis islamistes par l'établissement séculaire constituait l'élément de coercition, la dissolution du conservatisme de centre-droit dans les années 1990 a offert un espace d'opportunité et a constitué l'élément de consentement pour passer de l'islamisme au conservatisme. Au cours de cette période, les demandes de réforme de l'Union européenne en vue d'une adhésion éventuelle étaient en accord avec les intérêts de l'AKP. C'est-à-dire qu'elles visaient toutes les deux à supprimer la tutelle bureaucratique, mais pour des raisons différentes. Alors que l'Union européenne voulait harmoniser la démocratie turque avec les normes européennes, l'AKP voulait étendre sa sphère d'autorité aux dépens d'une bureaucratie de contrôle. Le programme de réformes était essentiel pour l'AKP afin de contenir et de désarticuler l'établissement bureaucratique tutélaire et de consolider sa position de pouvoir. La désarticulation de la tutelle bureaucratique s'est faite par l'expansion du domaine public qui s'est étendue en même temps que la désécurisation des questions. Par conséquent, la désécurisation était un cadre politique existentiel pour le Parti, mais elle n'était pas essentielle vu que le Parti allait abandonner ce programme et resécuriser le domaine public à des niveaux sans précédent après avoir consolidé son pouvoir.

Au cours de sa première période au pouvoir (2002-2007), l'AKP n'a pas créé de concept de menace significatif et s'est concentré sur la stabilité économique et politique par le

biais de la discipline fiscale et de la désacralisation de questions majeures de l'histoire républicaine : la question kurde et la suppression du style de vie conservateur dans l'espace public. Ces deux questions ont été définies comme les principales menaces pour l'intégrité territoriale du pays et l'identité civique promue par l'élite républicaine laïque. L'AKP a tenté d'introduire ces questions dans les discussions de l'espace politique, c'est-à-dire qu'il a essayé de les répolitiser. En d'autres termes, il a essayé de transformer ces questions en sujets de débat démocratique, dans lequel il avait beaucoup plus de chances que n'importe lequel de ses concurrents en raison du soutien populaire dont il bénéficiait. Ainsi, les efforts de désécurisation de l'AKP sont soutenus par les avantages dont il disposait dans l'espace public et politique.

Sur la question de la religiosité publique, l'AKP a suivi une stratégie de patience en s'appuyant sur la satisfaction qu'il a insufflée à son électorat du fait qu'un Premier ministre religieux dirigeait le pays. La présence même de la direction de l'AKP en tant que cadre conservateur-religieux dans le cadre de l'État laïque a créé une satisfaction évidente parmi sa base électorale. Au cours de cette période, l'AKP a gardé la question de la religiosité dans le domaine privé des dirigeants publiquement visibles, et a encadré les discussions sur la représentation religieuse dans l'espace public comme une question de liberté de pratique religieuse, évitant toute politique ou discours qui pourrait donner l'impression d'une transformation fondamentale par les mains de l'État.

Le principal groupe cible en termes d'audience électorale était l'électeur conservateur de l'AKP. Leur persuasion réussie a amené le parti au pouvoir et l'y a maintenu. Deux éléments ont été mis en avant dans cette persuasion : Premièrement, un leadership efficace avec une représentation charismatique des valeurs conservatrices dans la personne d'Erdoğan ; deuxièmement, la stabilité économique par la discipline fiscale. Parmi l'électorat conservateur, un nombre important de Kurdes ont trouvé une représentation préférable dans l'AKP, car le parti ne suivait pas la politique identitaire d'exclusion de l'établissement laïc. Erdoğan n'a pas opposé l'identité kurde à l'identité officielle turque dans le contexte discursif des multiples ethnies du pays, ce qui a eu un effet de légitimation des revendications kurdes aux yeux du public. En bref, malgré la résistance de l'établissement laïc, la question kurde et les manifestations publiques de l'Islam ont été mises à l'ordre du jour du débat public, c'est-à-dire qu'elles ont toutes les deux été substantiellement dé-sécurisées au cours de cette période. Dans sa politique d'évitement de la confrontation avec l'établissement, qui s'est montré sceptique quant à la loyauté du parti envers les valeurs républicaines, l'AKP a tenté de gagner

leur acceptation en s'alignant autant que possible sur leurs sensibilités, du moins au niveau discursif. Sur le plan international, l'AKP a créé une légitimité pour son pouvoir grâce à son championnat de l'UE favorable au marché et à sa politique étrangère non isolationniste. Au cours de cette période, le parti n'a pas ciblé un groupe spécifique de manière catégorique et excluante.

Après avoir gagné l'élan pro-démocratique dans sa lutte contre l'établissement séculaire, seul contre-pouvoir du pays, l'AKP a fait stagner les réformes et les a soumises à des calculs de coûts-bénéfices car il n'y avait pas de demande pressante de son électorat vers la fin des années 2000. En formant une relation symbiotique avec le MG, l'AKP a utilisé les ressources du mouvement dans les médias, dans la société civile et surtout dans la bureaucratie pour attaquer l'établissement au cœur et les forces armées turques par le biais des affaires *Ergenekon* et *Balyoz*. Il a emprisonné de nombreux officiers de haut rang, inclus le chef d'état-major général de l'époque. Avec le référendum constitutionnel de 2010, le parti a reconfiguré la composition du haut pouvoir judiciaire et l'a subordonné à l'exécutif via le nouveau système de nomination, toujours avec l'aide du MG. Sur la question kurde, qui constituait un point clé du programme de réforme de l'AKP, Erdoğan a utilisé un discours plutôt fluctuant. Après avoir déclaré l'ouverture kurde en 2009 pour surmonter la « question kurde » dans un cadre officiel, il a rejeté le cadre même de sa propre création en 2011, affirmant que la question avait été résolue et qu'il ne restait que le terrorisme du PKK. Dans l'ensemble, en été 2011, Erdoğan avait exposé et emprisonné des membres éminents de l'aile militaire de l'établissement par le biais des affaires *Ergenekon* et *Balyoz* et il avait doté la haute magistrature de ses fidèles, mettant pratiquement fin à la domination laïque de la haute bureaucratie.

Les réformes qui étaient existentielles lors du premier mandat (2002-2007) sont devenues progressivement conjecturales et finalement obsolètes lors du second mandat (2007-2011). Sortant de la première période avec une pratique de cohabitation réussie avec l'établissement laïc, le Parti a cherché à désarticuler l'établissement par des changements structurels et la dotation en personnel des institutions clés au cours de la deuxième période. En d'autres termes, l'AKP a commencé sa contre-attaque contre l'établissement séculariste avec l'alliance informelle qu'il a formée avec l'établissement güleniste dans la bureaucratie, et en rendant les sécularistes impuissants, il a supprimé la pression institutionnelle et systémique pour la désécurisation. En élevant la mentalité conservatrice à un niveau supérieur, du moins en termes électoraux, et en leur offrant une pleine représentation dans l'espace public, il ne

restait plus qu'une seule question majeure de désacralisation : la question kurde. L'ouverture que le parti a initiée pour les Kurdes et les flux et reflux qui ont suivi doivent être évalués à travers une analyse coût-bénéfice. L'ouverture s'est heurtée à la résistance du camp laïc (tant de la part de la bureaucratie que des partis politiques) et a été tirée dans une autre direction par son allié, les Gülenistes, et a donc été ralentie au point d'être complètement arrêtée.

L'AKP a entamé son second mandat en étant parfaitement conscient que tant que l'établissement laïc existerait, il ne pourrait pas consolider son pouvoir. Le parti avait également pu constater la capacité globale de l'établissement laïc à travers la lutte pour le pouvoir qu'il a menée avec lui en 2007. Son attitude non subordonnée face à la pression de l'établissement ayant été récompensée par un soutien populaire croissant, il était temps pour l'AKP de lancer sa contre-campagne contre l'établissement. En alliance avec l'établissement güleniste dans le système judiciaire et les forces de l'ordre, l'AKP a lancé les affaires *Ergenekon* et *Balyoz* avec des allégations de préparation de coup d'État. En soumettant l'établissement laïque à la pression judiciaire, l'AKP n'a pas seulement désarticulé les structures actives au sein de l'établissement, mais a également envoyé un message fort indiquant que de telles tentatives ne bénéficieraient pas de l'impunité à l'avenir. Survivant de justesse à l'affaire de la fermeture de la Cour constitutionnelle, l'AKP a étendu sa contre-attaque contre l'établissement avec les changements constitutionnels sur la structure du HSYK et de l'AYM via le référendum de 2010. Avec les changements détaillés dans ce chapitre, l'AKP a essentiellement remplacé une tutelle bureaucratique par son propre contrôle du pouvoir judiciaire. Par conséquent, les changements systémiques apportés par le référendum ont désécurisé la structure du pouvoir judiciaire supérieur pour l'AKP, mais l'ont resécurisé pour la performance démocratique globale du pays. En effet, les amendements ont donné au gouvernement la capacité de saper la séparation des pouvoirs et d'établir une tutelle civile par le biais du système judiciaire. Dans l'ensemble, l'établissement d'un contrôle gouvernemental sur les hautes instances judiciaires, le maintien d'institutions tutélaires comme le YÖK malgré les affirmations contraires d'Erdoğan, le maintien d'un seuil électoral de 10% pour entrer au Parlement, tout cela indique que les amendements de 2010 visaient principalement à consolider le pouvoir exécutif du gouvernement au détriment de la liberté judiciaire et d'un espace politique démocratique. En d'autres termes, les amendements de 2010 ont transféré l'agence de tutelle de la bureaucratie à l'exécutif, c'est-à-dire de l'établissement à l'AKP.



Le second mandat de l'AKP n'a pas montré de construction de menace significative par l'AKP. Toutefois, l'établissement laïc a été dépeint comme une menace pour la souveraineté populaire, l'exclusion anti-élite étant fortement utilisée par les dirigeants de l'AKP. Les membres présumés de l'établissement ont également été humiliés et indignés publiquement par les affaires *Ergenekon* et *Balyoz* et les débats qui les ont entourées. Les grandes communautés islamiques qui étaient auparavant considérées comme une menace en raison de leur arriération religieuse (*irtica*), telles que les Gülénistes et les communautés Naqshbandi, ont été sorties de ce cadre, c'est-à-dire dé-sécurisées, dans le document de politique de sécurité nationale, qui est considéré comme un document de sécurité autonome de type Constitution par l'appareil de sécurité turc. Ainsi recadrée, *l'irtica* a commencé à être utilisée pour encadrer des organisations violentes telles qu'Al-Qaïda et le Hezbollah. En outre, la question kurde a fait l'objet d'une importante désécurisation par la reconnaissance des droits culturels et linguistiques par l'État, mais, comme nous l'avons mentionné plus haut, l'ouverture n'a pas donné les résultats promis. En bref, tout en sécurisant l'établissement laïc, l'AKP a désacralisé la question kurde et les communautés islamiques. Pourtant, tous ces processus de désacralisation de l'établissement et de resécurisation des communautés islamiques changeront sélectivement mais fondamentalement au cours des prochains mandats du parti.

Après avoir désarticulé l'établissement séculaire (vers 2011), l'AKP n'avait plus besoin de réformes démocratiques ou de politiques de réconciliation, et dans la lignée de cela, le règne d'Erdoğan s'est progressivement affirmée et a adopté une attitude autoritaire en déclarant que de nombreux groupes étaient une menace et en limitant l'exercice des droits et libertés fondamentaux. Au cours de cette période, Erdoğan a polarisé la société par tous les débats possibles, s'est opposé à son ancien partenaire symbiotique, les gülénistes, a suivi des politiques d'exclusion à l'égard des groupes non conservateurs, en particulier à l'égard de ceux qui étaient activement impliqués dans les manifestations de Gezi, et a finalement recadré la question kurde comme une question de sécurité nationale, en inversant l'ordre du jour de ses années réformistes. En transformant une manifestation pacifique en une explosion d'activisme oppositionnel à Gezi, il a ensuite dépeint les manifestants comme une menace symbolique pour les valeurs conservatrices et les collaborateurs des puissances extérieures qui conspirent contre la Turquie. Il s'est référé aux agonies passées de ses partisans (qu'elles soient réelles ou perçues) dans un contexte de victimisation compétitive. Excluant les manifestants de Gezi par des moyens légaux, moraux et administratifs, Erdoğan a donc élaboré le concept de

« Nouvelle Turquie » comme une expression politique de son conservatisme affirmé se reflétant à travers le concept de « natif et national » dans l'espace socioculturel. Lors des enquêtes sur la corruption du 17 décembre qui ont forcé 4 ministres de son cabinet à démissionner, Erdoğan a prétendu qu'il s'agissait d'une tentative de coup d'État judiciaire par les membres gülenistes des forces de l'ordre, a dissous l'équipe d'enquête et a remanié des milliers de personnes au sein du système judiciaire et de la police. Peu de temps après les enquêtes, Erdoğan a qualifié le MG d' « État parallèle », impliquant son influence dans la bureaucratie étatique (qu'il a utilisée il y a quelques années contre l'établissement séculaire) et a fermé les énormes médias dirigés par le Mouvement. En quelques années, Erdoğan a effectivement sécurisé son principal allié et l'a réduit au silence.

La désarticulation de l'établissement laïc et l'installation d'un contrôle sur les TAF et la haute magistrature n'ont pas seulement supprimé les centrales tutélaires du système étatique turc qui avaient l'habitude d'intervenir dans la politique civile, mais ont également fourni un pouvoir pratiquement incontrôlé à Erdoğan et aux dirigeants de l'AKP. Tant dans le discours que dans l'élaboration des politiques, la politique a cessé d'être l'art de la réconciliation pour l'AKP, qui a commencé à faire la sourde oreille aux demandes de l'opposition. En l'absence d'une opposition politique efficace, le droit de réunion et la liberté d'expression sont restés les principaux lieux de manifestation de la dissidence. Comme on pouvait s'y attendre, ces deux domaines ont fait l'objet de pressions et d'une sécurisation de la part de l'AKP, dans son tournant autoritaire. Les politiques réconciliatrices des années réformistes ont été remplacées par une politique clairement agonistique et un discours polarisant.

Dans l'ensemble, la période 2011-2016 a été la première période de resécurisation, au cours de laquelle le leadership d'Erdoğan s'est progressivement affirmé et est devenu autoritaire, limitant l'exercice des droits et libertés fondamentaux pour de nombreux groupes. Au cours de cette période, Erdoğan a polarisé la société, s'est mis à dos son ancien collaborateur, les Gülenistes, a suivi des politiques d'exclusion à l'égard des groupes non conservateurs, en particulier ceux qui ont participé activement aux manifestations de Gezi, et a finalement recadré la question kurde comme une question de sécurité nationale, inversant le programme de ses années réformistes.

Au cours de cette période, deux grands concepts de menace ont été créés par l'AKP. Le premier est celui des « pouvoirs extérieurs », qui fait référence aux racines et à la motivation des manifestations de Gezi, et le second est celui de l' « État parallèle », qui fait

référence à la présence bureaucratique du mouvement Gülen. Le point commun entre ces deux conceptions de la menace est qu'elles attaquent toutes deux la légitimité des groupes ciblés. Comme dans la plupart des actes de sécurisation, la délégitimation des groupes justifie des « contre-mesures » qui vont de la répression illégale des manifestations par la force brutale de la police à la fermeture d'organes de presse, d'établissements d'enseignement et d'initiatives de la société civile.

La récrimination des manifestations de Gezi en présentant les manifestants comme les apparats de puissances extérieures qui visaient hideusement à évincer Erdoğan a été assimilée à une conspiration contre la stabilité et le progrès de la Turquie. L'ampleur et la portée de l'accusation ont rendu impossible de l'évaluer ou de la tester sur la base de faits, puisque les faits n'étaient tout simplement pas disponibles. Ce que l'AKP a fait, c'est réincarner la perception bien établie du « tout le monde contre nous » en Turquie et la juxtaposer à une opposition mobilisée. Quant au MM, l'accusation d'être l'État parallèle a suffi à perturber la nature organisée du Mouvement au sein de la bureaucratie, mais Erdoğan devait élever les accusations au rang de terrorisme pour déraciner complètement le MM au cours de la période suivante. Il n'a cessé d'affirmer que l'« État parallèle » l'avait trahi en tant que seul représentant légitime de la volonté publique et a mené une attaque organisée contre le « dirigeant élu » avec un coup d'État judiciaire qui a pris la forme d'enquêtes sur la corruption. Pour les accusations de terrorisme, il devait attendre quelque chose de plus spectaculaire qu'un « coup d'État judiciaire », ce qui s'est produit lors de la tentative de coup d'État de 2016, analysée dans le chapitre suivant.

La troisième conception de la menace peut être considérée comme la résurgence de la question kurde entre les mains d'Erdoğan, dont les politiques ont fluctué de manière spectaculaire et ont abouti à une resécurisation de la question. Cependant, Erdoğan ne s'est pas montré autoritaire envers l'ensemble de l'opposition simultanément. Lorsqu'il a attaqué les manifestants de Gezi, il a reporté sa lutte contre le GM. De même, lorsqu'il a attaqué le GM, il a essayé de maintenir les Kurdes de son côté. Dans la mesure du possible, il ne s'est jamais attaqué à sa dissidence en même temps. Une autre raison pour laquelle Erdoğan a retardé la resécurisation de la question kurde était l'arithmétique des élections de juillet 2015. Lorsqu'Erdoğan s'est rendu compte qu'il n'était plus aussi populaire qu'avant auprès de l'électeur kurde en présence d'une direction pro-kurde du HDP qui a réussi à intégrer la population, il a refondu la question en termes de sécurité pour restreindre le terrain de jeu du

HDP. Ce retard est révélateur du fait que la sécurisation est souvent effectuée en fonction des intérêts de l'élite dirigeante.

Entre 2016 et 2020, Erdoğan a rendu de jure son contrôle de facto sur le gouvernement et les principales institutions étatiques. La systématisation qui a accompagné la transition vers un système présidentiel a non seulement légitimé son contrôle mais a également centralisé davantage le pouvoir entre ses mains. Le fait de retirer la gendarmerie et les garde-côtes de l'autorité des forces armées turques (FAT) et de les subordonner au ministère de l'Intérieur a constitué une étape stratégique qui a modifié le monopole des FAT sur le pouvoir militaire. Évaluées conjointement avec les forces de police, la gendarmerie et les garde-côtes représentent une accumulation significative de force brute sous le contrôle direct du gouvernement civil. Quant aux forces terrestres, aériennes et navales, elles sont également subordonnées au ministère de la Défense et sont donc reléguées au second plan dans la hiérarchie de l'État, alors qu'elles étaient auparavant responsables devant le Premier ministre. Avec ces changements, il a établi une chaîne de commandement et de contrôle différente, fortement dominée par le gouvernement civil. Une fois ces changements pris en compte, ainsi que les modifications apportées aux critères de sélection de la haute magistrature, qui ont permis un contrôle explicite de la branche exécutive de l'État sur la branche judiciaire, on peut affirmer que la personnalité d'Erdoğan est devenue la centrale unique au sein de la structure de l'État. Dans une perspective historique, il a d'abord désarticulé l'établissement laïque, puis le GM dont le bras bureaucratique a hypothétiquement agi comme un établissement alternatif à l'établissement laïque, et est finalement devenu le « nouvel établissement en sa personne ».

La principale construction de la menace au cours de cette période s'est articulée autour du concept de terrorisme visant le MM et la politique pro-kurde qui a été le suspect habituel des politiques de sécurité. Alors que le MM a été présenté comme une menace existentielle pour la sécurité nationale, la politique pro-kurde a été réprimée par l'arrestation de ses dirigeants, l'affectation d'administrateurs aux municipalités et la persécution des signataires d'*Academics for Peace*. Dans les deux cas, Erdoğan s'est montré persuasif dans son action publique. Le pro-kurde était étroitement associé au terrorisme par les masses conservatrices et le GM avait -enfin- commis une haute trahison pour tout le pays avec la tentative de coup d'État ratée.

La principale différence entre les deux groupes qui ont été sécurisés au cours de cette période par l'AKP est qu'alors que les arrestations se sont limitées aux dirigeants de la

politique pro-kurde, le GM a été totalement éliminée de son capital social. L'ironie de la chose est qu'avant le coup d'État, Erdoğan accusait les dirigeants du GM de haute trahison et décrivait la participation massive du mouvement comme des victimes trompées et mal guidées par leurs dirigeants. Cependant, au lendemain du coup d'État, il a persécuté la participation de masse par centaines de milliers, tandis que les dirigeants du Mouvement ont largement fui le pays.

L'état d'exception en vigueur depuis les élections de 2011 a impliqué la sécurisation de différents groupes tels que les manifestants de Gezi, les Gülénistes et - encore une fois - les Kurdes. La tentative de coup d'État a intensifié la perception de la menace dans la société en général et a fourni un prétexte à l'AKP pour déclarer l'OHAL. En tant qu'état d'exception systématisé et légalisé, l'OHAL a été pratiquement utilisé pour éliminer les adversaires de l'AKP et mobiliser efficacement ses partisans. Les pratiques de l'OHAL ont également facilité la centralisation du pouvoir et la légitimation du régime présidentiel, qui a été effectivement entériné dans le cadre de l'OHAL. L'OHAL et le régime présidentiel ont officialisé l'agenda personnel d'Erdoğan en tant que programme d'État, au détriment des références démocratiques du pays.

Comme nous avons expliqué dans le dernier chapitre, la répression de la dissidence par Erdoğan à la suite de la tentative de coup d'État ratée de 2016 a entraîné des niveaux de sécurisation sans précédent avec les pratiques de l'état d'urgence qui ont duré 2 ans. La sécurisation a été sélective durant cette période comme les précédentes et a principalement visé le MG et la politique kurde. Accusant le Mouvement Gülen d'avoir orchestré et exécuté le coup d'État manqué, il a fait passer son ancien partenaire pour une organisation terroriste (FETO), l'a anéanti avec tout son capital social et humain, et a achevé la centralisation du pouvoir en son nom propre. L'OHAL et plus particulièrement les lois statutaires lui ont permis de contourner le contrôle parlementaire et d'exercer le « gouverner par décret ». Avec le système présidentiel, il a reconfiguré à sa guise la structure du pouvoir de l'État. Constituant la majorité simple au Parlement avec son partenaire le MHP, l'AKP d'Erdoğan pouvait légiférer comme il l'entendait et donc contrôler à la fois les pouvoirs exécutif et législatif de l'État aux côtés du pouvoir judiciaire qui avait déjà été placé sous le contrôle d'Erdoğan. Ainsi, il serait juste de prétendre, si quelque chose définit l'esprit politique de Erdoğan, que c'est le système présidentiel qu'il a apporté ; car, il n'a eu aucun obstacle bureaucratique, politique ou autre dans cette transition. Comme le système présidentiel est devenu possible en alliance avec le MHP lors du vote parlementaire et du référendum qui a suivi, et que la survie

de l'AKP au pouvoir est fortement liée au soutien du MHP, ce dernier a été présenté dans cette thèse comme « facilitateur et limiteur stratégique » pour le premier. Quant à la question kurde, Erdoğan a fait arrêter le leader plutôt populaire du HDP pro-kurde, Selahattin Demirtaş, a fait arrêter, avec beaucoup d'autres à la tête du parti, des administrateurs dans des dizaines de municipalités qui ont été gagnées par des politiciens pro-kurdes aux élections locales, y compris des villes et a fait arrêter de nombreux universitaires (Académiciens pour la paix) qui appelaient à une solution pacifique de la question.

Dans son tournant autoritaire, la direction d'Erdoğan a utilisé différents moyens et lieux pour dominer les domaines qui ne relèvent pas directement de l'exécutif mais qui l'améliorent de manière significative. Les principaux domaines en tant que tels sont les médias, le monde des affaires (secteur privé) et la société civile, chacun ayant des tâches spécifiques. Les médias ont permis à Erdoğan de contrôler l'accès à l'information, même partielle, et de contrôler le récit de l'agenda sociopolitique. Le secteur privé l'a aidé à créer des personnes loyales parmi les milieux d'affaires et à utiliser leurs ressources dans son intérêt, par exemple en créant une caisse noire pour la propriété des médias. La société civile a prolongé le message de l'AKP dans la sphère sociétale et a exprimé sa solidarité avec Erdoğan à des moments critiques. Malgré l'absence de preuves substantielles, les activités dans ces trois secteurs semblent avoir été orchestrées par les dirigeants de l'AKP de manière moins officielle. Elles ont servi à la fois des objectifs offensifs et défensifs en facilitant le fonctionnement politique de l'AKP de manière efficace et en faisant pression sur la dissidence de diverses manières, dont certaines sont développées dans les parties suivantes.

La réalisation générale de ce travail a quand même rencontré certains obstacles. Au départ, de multiples entretiens approfondis sur les effets globaux du coup d'État manqué ont été prévus avec des personnalités savantes de différents horizons politiques. Comme il ne serait pas possible de le faire au lendemain du coup d'État, nous avons prévu de le faire en Europe, principalement en France et en Allemagne. Mais l'impossibilité de quitter le pays nous a forcé de retirer les entretiens du programme de recherche. Un autre problème a apparu lorsque nous nous sommes mis à essayer d'obtenir des informations saines sur le Mouvement Gülen, car ils sont restés évasifs sur des questions débattues, telles que ; la présence prétendument organisée du mouvement dans la bureaucratie et les aspirations politiques qu'ils avaient. Étant donné l'absence d'un discours de masse et la formation d'un parti politique, il serait juste de supposer que le MG n'avait pas de grande stratégie autre que la soif d'une croissance constante en accord avec sa nature favorable au capitalisme. Un troisième

problème s'est émergé dans le niveau d'analyse : Puisque notre travail se concentre sur la formation et la transformation de l'AKP, il met l'accent sur la politique intérieure. Cependant, les analyses de certaines questions telles que la présence militaire turque dans le nord de l'Irak et en Syrie compléteront l'évaluation globale sur la sécurisation de la question kurde. Un autre point qui a été laissé en suspens est la condition de l'établissement séculaire à la date de finalisation de cette thèse. Notre recherche reconnaît qu'ils ont cessé d'exister en tant que structure de domination effective à partir de 2011 et il s'est avéré correct jusqu'à présent qu'ils n'ont pas fait preuve d'une quelconque intervention dans la politique civile dominée par Erdoğan après cette date. Les verdicts dans les affaires *Ergenekon* et *Balyoz* sont venus en faveur des accusés dès 2015 et la plupart d'entre eux ont été réaffectés à des postes actifs. En outre, tout comme l'AKP, son partenaire, le MHP est en transition avec l'établissement séculaire de la bureaucratie qui pourrait être en train de connaître une sorte de régénération dans l'univers opaque de la bureaucratie turque. Comme ces structures n'ont pas de statut officiel, la certitude concernant leur statut sera acquise si et quand elles interviendront dans la politique.

La transition vers le système présidentiel a eu lieu lors de notre recherche et le fait de remporter plus de 50% des voix a été la condition première de la mise en place du gouvernement. Cela était inattendu car Erdoğan avait créé une dépendance à son allié, le MHP bien plus qu'aucun dirigeant ne le voudrait. Compte tenu des alliances fluides qu'il a eues dans le passé avec le MHP et l'établissement séculaire, il n'était pas prévu que Erdoğan s'engage dans une alliance aussi contraignante. Peut-être pensait-il que l'opposition ne serait jamais capable de former une coalition électorale fonctionnelle et de rivaliser avec son bloc de pouvoir, mais elle l'a fait et a remporté une victoire éclatante aux élections locales de 2019.

Au moment où notre travail était en cours de finalisation (en février 2021), aucune tentative significative n'a été faite par l'AKP pour établir quoi que ce soit dans le but de ressembler à un État islamique ou à la charia, ce qui prouve que de nombreux sceptiques laïques et analystes internationaux ignorant la nature *sui generis* de la politique turque avaient tort. Comme le montre l'une des hypothèses de cette recherche, l'AKP s'est définitivement éloigné de l'islamisme et il est allé de l'avant en exploitant des possibilités beaucoup plus larges du conservatisme turc. Si Erdoğan avait l'intention d'introduire quelque chose de ce genre, il l'aurait fait pendant l'état d'urgence qui a suivi la tentative de coup d'État, c'est-à-dire lorsqu'il a pratiquement exercé un pouvoir incontrôlé.

Au moment où notre recherche était en cours de finalisation, l'AKP poursuivait son voyage vers le pouvoir en s'alliant avec son dernier partenaire, le MHP, dans un heureux mariage de convenance sur la base d'un autoritarisme compétitif. Alors que la Turquie a obtenu la 107<sup>ème</sup> place sur 128 pays dans l'Index de l'État de droit du Projet de justice mondiale, elle se classe en tant que la 124<sup>ème</sup> dans la catégorie des contraintes imposées au gouvernement et la 123<sup>ème</sup> dans la catégorie des droits fondamentaux. *Freedom House* considère actuellement le gouvernement d'Erdoğan en tant qu' « autoritaire » et classe la Turquie en tant que « non libre » dans ses évaluations globales et à nouveau « non libre » dans la catégorie de la liberté sur l'internet dans ses évaluations de 2020. Le rapport de *HumanRights Watch* de 2021 commence par les expressions suivantes : « L'attaque contre les droits de l'homme et l'État de droit présidée par le président turc RecepTayyipErdoğan s'est poursuivie pendant la pandémie de Covid-19 ». Il souligne le contrôle continu de l'exécutif sur le pouvoir judiciaire. Mentionnant les journalistes, les militants et les dirigeants du HDP comme étant les personnes visées par l'AKP d'Erdoğan, le rapport mentionne les gülenistes comme étant le plus grand groupe opprimé par le gouvernement.

Cependant, le soutien à l'alliance AKP-MHP s'est érodé si bien que 25 % de la population croient que le pays change pour le mieux tandis que 60 % pensent le contraire. Le soutien à la direction d'Erdoğan est d'environ 37% alors que l'opposition obtient 43%, ce qui rend 19% de l'électorat indécis. Le nombre important d'électeurs indécis est principalement lié à la faible performance économique. Erdoğan, qui était pleinement conscient de cela, a changé le président de la Banque centrale et le ministre du Trésor et des Finances en remplaçant son gendre. Afin d'éviter un conflit avec le gouvernement américain nouvellement élu de Joe Biden et les sanctions de l'Union européenne qui seraient décidées en mars 2021 et aussi pour attirer les investissements étrangers dont le pays a tant besoin, Erdoğan a commencé à mentionner des réformes possibles. Mais ni son leadership ne pouvait rester au pouvoir face à la démocratie et à l'État de droit dans le pays ni son partenaire plus nationaliste, le MHP ne permettait de compromis significatif sur le discours et les politiques du bloc de pouvoir axés sur la sécurité.

Une autre contrainte à la manœuvrabilité d'Erdoğan se montre sous la formation de deux nouveaux partis politiques par d'anciens membres éminents de ses gouvernements ; le Parti du Futur par Ahmet Davutoğlu et le Parti de la Démocratie et du Progrès par Ali Babacan. Avec leur tendance positive à la croissance et leurs politiques culturellement conservatrices, ces deux partis ont mis fin au monopole de Erdoğan sur la politique



conservatrice aux côtés du parti nationaliste İP. Tout bien considéré, Erdoğan est pris au piège d'un conservatisme d'un nationalisme et d'une orientation sécuritaire sans précédent et on ne sait pas encore combien de temps il restera au pouvoir.

## **From De-securitization to Re-securitization: The Formation and Transformation of Turkey’s Justice and Development Party**

### **Résumé**

Ce travail examine les raisons sous-jacentes et l'agencement des changements fondamentaux que l'AKP a subis par rapport au concept de « sécurisation » ; une nouvelle approche qui place les choix faits en fonction des intérêts de l'élite dirigeante au centre des politiques de sécurité. La démocratie turque étant moins que consolidée, mettre l'accent sur les choix et les intérêts de ces dirigeants et sur la manière dont ils élargissent et rétrécissent le domaine public et politique offre une approche appropriée pour étudier les grands changements du pays. Dans ce travail, les changements fondamentaux que le leadership d'Erdoğan a fait subir au pays au cours des deux dernières décennies ont été examinés dans une périodisation réalisée sur la base des mouvements de l'AKP, plus précisément sur l'axe de la sécurisation qui a impliqué des transformations dans le discours, le politique et les alliances.

### **Résumé an anglais**

This thesis examines the underlying reasons and agency of the fundamental changes that the AKP has gone through over the concept of “securitization”; a new approach that places the choices made in line with the interests of the ruling elite in the centre stage of security policies. As Turkey’s democracy is less-than-consolidated, laying the emphasis on the choices and interests of these leaders and how they expand and shrink the public and political space offers a suitable approach to study the major changes of the country. In this thesis, the fundamental changes that Erdoğan leadership has taken the country through in the last two decades have been examined in a periodization which was made on the basis of AKP’s moves on the axis of securitization that involved transformations in discourse, policy and alliances.