THE CHANGING NATURE OF ISLAMISM IN TURKEY:
A COMPARISON OF ERBAKAN AND ERDOĞAN

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ABSTRACT

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The present study discusses the impact of the general change with the rise of new tendencies in Turkish politics on Islamist groups. The main purpose in writing this thesis is that of investigating the differences and similarities between two banned politicians, Necmettin Erbakan and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, concerning their views on secularism and Islam-democracy relationship in Turkey. It is basically argued that the differences seem to be greater than the similarities if their current discourses are carefully analyzed. Erdoğan realized that change is inevitable. As a consequence, his discourse has gone through a consistent change. In contrast, Erbakan did nothing but has given an image that his views are erratic. It is obvious that political Islam has been on the wane in Turkish politics. A new formation that praises democracy and secularism seems to get the chance to give a new direction to the so-called Islamist movement in Turkey.

Keywords: Turkey, Erbakan, Erdoğan, change, Islam, democracy, secularism.

ÖZET

TÜRKİYE'DE İSLAMCILIĞIN DEĞİŞEN YAPISI:
BİR ERBAKAN VE ERDOĞAN KARŞILAŞTIRMASI

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Mevcut çalışma, Türk politikasında yeni eğilimlerin yükselişiyle birlikte oluşan genel değişimin İslamcı gruplar üzerindeki etkilerini tartışmaktadır. Bu tezi yazmadaki temel amaç iki yasaklı politikacı, Necmettin Erbakan ve Recep Tayyip Erdoğan'ın laiklik ve Türkiye'de İslam-demokrasi ilişkisi hakkındaki görüşlerinde bulunan benzerlik ve farklılıkları ortaya çıkartmaktır. Esas olarak savunulan şudur ki eğer ikisinin de şu andaki söylemleri dikkatlice analiz edilirse farklılıklar benzerliklere göre daha fazla görünmektedir.Erdoğan değişimin kaçınılmaz olduğunu fark etmiştir. Bunun sonucunda söylemi tutarlı bir değişim içerisine girmiştir. Aksine, Erbakan görüşlerinin tutarsız ve değişken olduğu izlenimini vermek dışında birşey yapmamıştır. Çok açıktır ki siyasal İslam, Türk politikasında kayboluş sürecine girmiştir. Demokrasi ve laikliğe değer veren yeni bir oluşum Türkiye'de İslamcı hareket diye adlandırılan harekete yeni bir yön verme şansını elde edecekmiş gibi görünmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Türkiye, Erbakan, Erdoğan, değişim, İslam, demokrasi, laiklik.

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Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

Consolidation of democracy is one of the primary issues in Turkish politics and Islamic revivalism has been considered as one of the main obstacles for a consolidated democracy in Turkey. Since 'change' has become a fact of the social, political, and economic life in contemporary Turkey, I think it would be necessary to look at Islamism again in order to investigate whether Islamist groups have also changed or not. This essay is an attempt to understand the impact of the general change in the Turkish polity on Islamist groups. Since I think the change has not occurred at the same level in every Islamist groups, the comparison of the Islamist political views of two banned politicians, Necmettin Erbakan and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, on secularism and Islam-democracy relationship in Turkey shall be useful in that dimension. Analyzing their discourses might give an idea about the change in Islamist movement. I expect the analysis would also help us to discover whether Turkish democracy becomes successful in coping with the increasing importance of religious issues and in reaching a consensus on them.

Erbakan and Erdoğan are not chosen coincidently. They are the two most important politicians that have been influential in the Islamist movement. The story of religious politics in Turkey is identical to the story of Erbakan in Turkish politics. He was the unchallenged leader of the Islamist political movement. When his party became victorious in the 1995 general elections, he was given the chance to erase the negative image that he was a fundamentalist. However, he failed to do so. Then, Islamism has entered into a new phase. There has been emerged a second road in front of it. Islamists have two options: either to continue with the old discourse or to undergo a modification and create a novel political line. In the current situation, he is Erdoğan that has had an historic chance to make a new beginning by forming a synthesis between democracy and Islam as well as pulling the Islamic movement toward moderation.

Elaborating on Erbakan's and Erdoğan's political ideas and actions might give answers to the significant question some scholars pose,[1] about whether their inclusion in the political system opens a way for them to become moderate and for Turkey to go one step further in the consolidation of democracy. Metin Heper argues that Islam-democracy relationship might work in harmony in reaching a consolidated democracy only if the Islamists abandon their struggles against the main pillars of the secular regime and on the other side if the secularist elites stop trying to impose on the Islamists their idealized life-styles and values.[2] Other important questions that this essay will address are: first, whether the Islamists have become moderate and close to

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[1] White, 'Pragmatists or Ideologues?' and M. Hakan Yavuz, 'Political Islam and the Welfare Party in Turkey', *Comparative Politics*, vol. 30, no. 1 (October 1997), pp. 63-82.
[2] Metin Heper, 'Islam and Democracy in Turkey: Toward a Reconciliation?', *The Middle East Journal*, vol. 51, no. 1 (Winter 1997), p. 45.

center in the political spectrum as they have become part of the system or after they were -to some degree- excluded by the February 28 process and second, do both Erdoğan and Erbakan seem to be changed as a political maneuver or have they changed because it is an inevitable outcome of the general transformation in Turkey as well as independent of transformation in Turkey.

In parallel with the rise of new tendencies in Turkish politics, the content of Erbakan and Erdoğan's speeches and the meanings they gave to the terms have changed dramatically throughout the years. It is difficult to scrutinize the changes in their statements since the change by time is nonlinear. Especially in the case of Erbakan it would not be wrong to label his behavior as 'erratic'. Another problem is that their statements and political actions have not been consistent though Erdoğan seems to be less inconsistent in his words and deeds. Thus, I decided to examine the issues under two chapters that are reserved for Erbakan and Erdoğan separately. Each chapter would be composed of three subparts – namely, the background and the summary of their political lives, their views on democracy and secularism, and the relationship with the military. What I do in both parts is first contextualizing the changes by following the chronological order of events in addition to the influence of the new political currents and contemporary developments and, second examining the consistencies or inconsistencies between their statements and their actions. I have been cognizant of the fact that words can be loaded different meanings from time to time as well as from individual to individual thus they would not mean the same thing in each and every position Therefore, praxis is a more reliable indicator in hunting for

one's real intentions, but then the question of whether praxis reflects one's true intentions remains.

The relationship between Islam and politics is more complex and hard to acknowledge than it is usually thought. Islam as a religion offers a scheme for ordering human life. In that scheme the significance of politics comes into the picture especially in order to secure universal compliance. It is said that in its origins Islam is both a religious collectivity and a body politic.[3] Islam has spread to different continents among different cultures. Thus, the role that Islam plays differs from one area to another. There is not a unified understanding but rather different groups in the Islamic world interpret the Qur'anic verses and the hadiths of the Prophet differently. Therefore, homogenizing the multiple movements of Islamic revivalism that have emerged in different parts of the world may lessen the impact of situational factors and the nature of the political systems.

The other important thing is that not all political institutions in the Islamic world have been established directly by following the religious norms. For instance, in the Ottoman Empire Islam was crucial in encompassing the social and political life. However, that does not mean the Ottoman state was organized as a theocratic structure. Freedom for different religions and sects to be organized in accordance with their own belief systems was provided as long as they were loyal to the Sultan. Although caliphate was an institution, state also felt responsible in providing a peaceful and just venue for the members of the other religions. As Nejat Göyünç put forward, the fact that in collecting taxes of the non-Muslim subjects by their church,

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[3] W. Montgomery Watt, *İslami Hareketler ve Modernlik*, Turan Koç, trans. (İstanbul: İz Yayıncılık, 1997), p. 139.

demanding assistance from the state by the clergy is found in the archives.[4] Furthermore, it was not only the *Shari'a* that was taken as a base but also customs were given importance. There observed a dual character in the sense of laws (*şer'i* and *örfi*). *Örfi* law was the compilation of the *ferman*s (edicts) of sultans that brought the customs of previous times while *şer'i* law was the rules of God that was the fundamental and immutable law. Sultanic laws, as Halil İnalcık stresses, were based on rational and not religious principles and were enacted primarily in the spheres of public and administrative law.[5] Domestic law in the sense of bureaucracy was shaped according to *örfi* law whereas the relationship of the state with the subjects was based on *şer'i* law. What makes the Ottoman Empire unique was the harmony between religious law and *örfi* law, the latter being autonomous from religion. The *şeyhulislam* as the highest authority on the matters concerning the *Shari'a* was not given the permission to interfere in the executive and legislative branches. Although his advice was taken, he was not a member of *Divan*, which was the highest agency in the decision-making. By that way, Ottoman State structure contained some secular characteristics in practice. On the other hand, Islam played a significant role in providing loyalty of the Sunni majority to the state since in the Sunni understanding obedience to *ulu'l emr* (the ruler which has the authority) is very important for the continuation of order and peace.[6]

The role and function of Islam changed dramatically throughout Turkish history. In the Ottoman era, Islam had a function of providing social control. 'In so

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[4] Nejat Göyünç, 'Osmanlı Devleti Hakkında', *Cogito*, no. 19 (1999), p. 91.
[5] Halil İnalcık, *The Ottoman Empire: The Classical Age, 1300-1600* (London: Phoenix, 1994), p. 70.
[6] See Hamid Enayat, *Modern Islamic Political Thought: The Response of the Shi`and Sunni Muslims to the Twentieth Century* (Houndmills: Macmillan, 1982).

far as religion was the main institution controlling culture, there was found in it a means of establishing a generalized social control otherwise lacking.'[7] Later, in the years of decline Islam became a tool for national unity as a 'widespread ideological force' during the reign of Abdulhamit II.[8] However, in general the era of *Tanzimat* (1839-1876) was the reordering period that Islam began to lose comprehensiveness in the political and social spheres. Its features of providing legitimacy and establishing bonds lost effectiveness gradually. During the War of Independence (1919-1923), Islam played an important role in uniting people around the National Resistance Forces, especially in Anatolia. In the revolutionary period after the Turkish War of Independence, religion began to be considered as an obstacle in the positivist modernization project of the republican elites that aimed at westernization, secularization, and modernization. Since the elites realized the fact that 'religion is a multi-functional peg on which values, personalities, ideologies and power could be hung',[9] they planned to control Islam as a political force and to recognize it only as a matter of personal devotion. Islam, from then on, however, began to assume a different role, which was 'a means of protest against one-party regime'.[10] Nevertheless, there were important points that the republican elites did not take into account: Islam was embedded in the social life by regulating day-to-day relations and the Islamic consciousness among the masses was hard to be destroyed completely.

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[7] Şerif Mardin, 'Ideology and Religion in the Turkish Revolution', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, no. 2 (1971), p. 206.

[8] Stanford J. Shaw and Ezel Kural Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey, Volume II: Reform, Revolution and Republic, 1808-1975* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 259.

[9] Şerif Mardin, 'Ideology and Religion in the Turkish Revolution', p. 208.

[10] Metin Heper, 'Islam, Politics and Change in the Middle East' in *Islam and Politics in the Modern Middle East*, Metin Heper and Raphael Israeli, eds. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1984), p. 6.

Islam provided patterns for Turkish Muslims to follow in these spheres, which is why it is important for them. Kemalist secular culture left these pockets of Turkish culture empty in the sense that it consisted only of general injunctions to take the West as an example. It provided no equivalent for the widely used Islamic idiom, it did not understand the degree to which existing space-time configurations were rooted and it had no strategies of the quotidian to offer the masses.[11]

The space left for Islam by the 'modernization project' was so small that no Islam-base political formation could emerge until 1945. Between 1945 and 1950, a number of parties emerged that had special references to Islam in their party programs. For instance the National Resurgence Party (*Milli Kalkınma Partisi* - MKP) that was established in 1945 sought to make the project of World Islamic Federation real. It also gave importance to morality and traditional values. One year after, another party, the Social Justice Party (*Sosyal Adalet Partisi* - SAP) was set up which aimed at supporting a world federation of Muslim peoples. Except the Nation Party (*Millet Partisi* - MP) they were not considered as important. The MP in a very short time got significant support from Islamists. However, those parties even the MP could not gain significant portion of votes. With the victory of the Democratic Party (*Demokrat Parti* - DP) in 1950 it was the DP that controlled the religious fervor and to some extent use religion for political ends. Nevertheless, as Binnaz Toprak points out, it never followed 'a policy of encouraging obscurantism'[12] except for a brief period in the late 1950s. In the free atmosphere that 1961 Constitution created, different social groups had the opportunity to form their own political organizations. Religious ideology also came to the agenda alongside nationalist and socialist

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[11] Şerif Mardin, 'Islam in Mass Society: Harmony versus Polarization', in *Politics in the Third Turkish Republic*, Metin Heper and Ahmet Evin, eds. (Oxford: Boulder, 1994), p. 164.
[12] Binnaz Toprak, *Islam and Political Development In Turkey* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1981), p. 88.

ideologies. The change in the world conjuncture and the spread of liberal democracy after the Second World War had favorable impacts on being paid greater attention in Turkey. That made it possible for the Islamist portion of society to bring their demands to the public sphere by using the existing political channels. Their attempts resulted in setting up political parties, which generally aimed responding to the economic and social demands of Islamic portion. For some small radical groups though, the objective became that of challenging the secular order. The vast majority of the Islamic oriented groups did not welcome those kinds of movements; rather, they preferred being in harmony with the rules of the system.

In economic terms, industrial capitalism started to emerge which later led to 'the separation of small bourgeoisie from the big commercial and industrial bourgeoisie'.[13] The small bourgeoisie was mostly comprised of Anatolian conservative Muslims who were in the periphery. Thus, the deep center-periphery cleavage showed itself then in the economic arena between the big commercial and industrial bourgeoisie as a supporter of the secular regime in the center and the small conservative bourgeoisie in the periphery. The latter tried to find ways to challenge the monopoly of the former in Turkish economy. That goal united nationalist-conservative and Islamist groups, as observed in the 1969 elections of the Turkish Union of Commerce, Industry, Maritime Trade, and Trade Exchange. Necmettin Erbakan was the sole candidate and got support from nationalist, conservative and Islamist groups.

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[13] Doğan Duman, *Demokrasi Sürecinde Türkiye'de İslamcılık* (İzmir: Dokuz Eylül Yayınları, 1997), p. 70.

Under the guidance of the leader of a religious order[14] the National Order Party (*Milli Nizam Partisi* - MNP) was established with the emphasis on industrialization of Turkey in order not to be a market of the West and at the same time returning back to its authentic identity through the reconstruction of Ottoman morality. The traditional-Islamic Anatolian capital became the backbone of the supporters of the party after it was founded. Erbakan, with the consent of Mehmet Zahid Kotku, became the leader of the party.

Those years were defined as the years of 'initial charismatic period of Islamic resurgence in the Middle East'.[15] In many of those countries, Islamic movements began to be observed in the political contexts as a reaction to secularization projects with the aim of bringing back the old structures. However, in Turkey, the implicit attempts to establish a *Shari'a*-based state have never found popular support. Indeed, the strong state was not challenged but continued to receive respect from many of the Islamic groups.[16]

Following the 1980 military coup, which aimed to put an end to the unrest, the attitude of military toward Islam seemed to be changed. They used religion as a pacifying and unifying force to cure one of the maladies of the Turkish political system, polarization. At that process, on one hand various representations of Islam began to emerge in the public sphere while on the other Islam became de-politicized. Personal religious devotion was accepted as a feature of 'good citizenship'. However,

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[14] Mehmet Zahid Kotku was the Sheikh of the *Nakşibendi* order; his objective was the restoration of morality and virtue. He became the leader of the group that was known as *İskenderpaşa cemaati* after he was appointed to the *İskenderpaşa* Mosque as *İmam* in 1958.

[15] Sami Zubaida, 'Trajectories of Political Islam: Egypt, Iran and Turkey', *The Political Quarterly*, vol. 71, Supp. 1 (2000), p. 75.

[16] To elaborate more on the strong state in Turkey see Metin Heper, *The State Tradition in Turkey* (Walkington: The Eothen Press, 1985).

the military manipulated the electoral process by limiting the number of parties to three and excluded the Islamists.[17] State became much more involved in every aspect of social life.

Turgut Özal's Motherland Party (*Anavatan Partisi* –ANAP) era (1983-1989) was characterized by many transformations and modifications. In April 1991, the notorious Article 163 that forbade the use of religion for political purposes was annulled. By that way the legislative tool of courts in taking legal action against active Islamists was removed while it remained unconstitutional to use religion for political activity. Market-oriented policies were implemented and mass migration to urban centers and industrialization rocketed. Özal encouraged the foundation of Islamic banks. Economic liberalization in Turkey led to the emergence of new conservative bourgeoisie having new-fangled demands, while the veneration for democratization in addition to the articulation of new ideas through the expansion of communication ended up with the emergence of Islamist intelligentsia. 'The creation of a *jeunesse dorée* (huge numbers of young people-yuppie class) was matched by the increase in the obvious symbols of adherence to Islam, an increase openly supported by Özal and his government.'[18] Özal's success in including Islamists to the newly emerged consumption-based structure encouraged them in creating a novel identity due to the requirements of the situation. Becoming a good consumer led them to adopt liberal and global values and thus eased the formulation of Islamist identity. As

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[17] The 1983 general elections was a limited choice elections. The three political parties that were allowed were Turgut Özal's ANAP, Turgut Sunalp's National Democracy Party (*Milliyetçi Demokrasi Partisi* –MDP) and Necdet Calp's Populist Party (*Halkçi Parti* – HP). The NSC had veto power over the candidates of permitted parties as well. New electoral law was prepared by the NSC and Constitutional Assembly. A qualified d'Hondt system with double thresholds--national threshold and constituency level threshold--was practiced in the elections.

[18] David Shankland, *Islam and Society in Turkey* (Cambridgeshire: The Eothen Press, 1999), p. 40.

consumption became a way of communicating with 'others',[19] Islamic middle-class began to achieve the participatory tools in order to be transformed. Taste and style linked consumption practices to 'class-specific codes, meanings, and competences'.[20]

Islam began to be considered as the true identity by a bulk of people since they thought that they had not been provided a comparable identity or values until that time.[21] As Ayşe Saktanber states, since the 1980s two intertwined processes have been observed: First, middle-class ethos for an Islamic social order is actualized as part of a political and social effort. Second, private sphere has been expanded 'to cover new areas of sociabilities' and its content has been changed.[22] The traditional role of women has changed. Islamist women have become more involved in politics and actuality as well as more visible in the public sphere. The emergence of new Islamic middle class converged with the existence of Islamic version of everything such as Islamic fashion, Islamic music, and Islamic journals and books. All aspects of private life have made Islam pervasive in Turkish society but in a modern sense.[23]

The 1990s were important years for the Islamism in transformation. On one side, the process of critique inside Islam concerning traditional Islamic interpretations was initiated. The spread of translation books of reformist Islamist intellectuals in

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[19] See Alan Warde, *Consumption Matters* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996).

[20] Ayşe Öncü, 'The Myth of the 'Ideal Home': Travels Across Borders to Istanbul' in *Space , Culture and Power: New Identities in Globalizing Cities,* Ayşe Öncü and Peter Weyland, eds. (London & New Jersey: Zed, 1997), p. 59.

[21] Jenny B. White, 'Pragmatists or Ideologues? Turkey's Welfare Party in Power', *Current History*, vol. 96 (January 1997), p. 28.

[22] Ayşe Saktanber, 'Formation of a Middle-Class Ethos and Its Quotidien: Revitalizing Islam in Urban Turkey' in *Space, Culture and Power: New Identities in Globalizing Cities,* Ayşe Öncü and Peter Weyland, eds. (London & New Jersey: Zed, 1997), p. 142.

[23] Şerif Mardin, *Religion and Social Change in Modern Turkey: The Case of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1989), p. 229.

Egypt and Iran[24] brought new concepts such as modernity, social justice and revolution to the Islamic thinking and opened novel debates. Many groups began to discuss that traditional Islamic tendencies were not sufficient anymore in adopting to the requirements of daily life.[25] In addition to that, the ideas of those thinkers functioned as a philosophical base for the newly emerged Islamist intelligentsia. Gradually, Islamic notions and structures began to be adapted to the socio-political realities of modern and Western thinking. Religion reconstructed its sphere and drew its boundaries with the assistance of its believers and hence came to the agenda as a 'new referential vehicle, being defined through a novel dimension within the forms of modernity'.[26] In Turkey, Islam could guarantee its existence only by becoming modern since the channels for religion to function in a traditional way in the public sphere were closed.[27]

On the other side, Islam became institutionalized with the establishment of Islamic organizations. At that point Islamic communities played a significant role. They set up their own TV channels, radio stations, newspapers, and established many civil society organizations. Apart from communities, the Welfare Party was also effective in setting up many organizations that defended its discourses in different areas. As an alternative for TÜSİAD (Turkish Industrialists' and Businessmen's Association), MÜSİAD (Independent Industrialists' and Businessmen's Association), for TOBB (the Turkish Union of Commerce, Industry, Maritime Trade, and Trade

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[24] Şeriati, Fazlurrahman, Hamidullah, and brothers Kutub were the most popular ones whose books were influential on Turkish Islamic groups.
[25] W. Montgomery Watt, *İslami Hareketler ve Modernlik*, p. 111.
[26] Necdet Subaşı, 'Arzular ve Gerçekler-Modernleşen Türkiye'de Dinin Referans Gücü', *Türkiye Günlüğü*, no. 59 (2000), p. 82.
[27] Ibid.

Exchange) MESDER (Independent Traders' and Artisans' Association), and for IHD (Human Rights' Association) MAZLUMDER were established.

The rise of religious demands in the political arena as well as the above changes led some scholars to focus their attention on these developments. They collected all under the name of 'political Islam'[28] and tried to analyze the reasons that gave rise to it. Among them, some[29] explained the rise of 'political Islam' as a reflection of the economic and cultural transformations that have taken place at the global level. World politics was no longer considered as state centric, in which states are the main units of analysis. New actors in international politics have emerged and thus non-territorial forms of economic and political organizations- supranational bodies, multinational corporations as 'impersonal forces of world markets',[30] and international regulatory agencies- became influential actors in addition to the states. States are no longer left in solitude because politics today is preoccupied with the problem of the global crises and in part with the question of how to grapple with it. 'There is a strong and durable link between the structure and process of the international political economy, on the one hand, and the content of the international security agenda, on the other.'[31] Since in the newly emerged world order the states

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[28] I think the tendency to use the term 'political Islam' in a broadest sense to describe all kinds of Islamist movements may result in reductionism and overgeneralization. Political Islam referring to movements and groups within the 'broadest fundamentalist revival' with a specific political goals particularly establishing a regime based on *Shari'a* should not be used as a general category. It may be misleading to label the Islamist movements aiming at moral development as 'political Islam'. Thus, I try to be careful in using 'political Islam' throughout the essay.

[29] Haldun Gülalp, 'Globalization and Political Islam: The Social Bases of Turkey's Welfare Party', *International Journal of Middle East Studies,* vol. 33 (2001), pp. 433-448. Ziya Öniş, 'The Political Economy of Islamic Resurgence in Turkey: The Rise of the Welfare Party in Perspective', *Third World Quarterly,* vol. 18, no. 4 (1997), pp. 743-766.

[30] Susan Strange, *The Retreat of the State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 4.

[31] Barry Buzan, 'The Interdependence of Security and Economic Issues in the "New World Order" in *Political Economy and the Changing Global Order*, Richard Stubbs and Geoffrey R. D. Underhill, eds. (Toronto: McClelland and Stuart; London: MacMillan; New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994), p. 99.

became much more vulnerable, they began to be more interdependent in many issues. Hence, the necessity of cooperation in the issues related to economics, trade, security, and environment among them became evident. However, facing uncertainty, states have few options but to conform to the norms of the so-called international regime. They mostly try to be integrated with the world order for not to be marginalized because 'opting out is out'.[32] For instance, new modes and structures came into existence in Turkish political setting in line with the political objective of Turkey about being integrated with the European Union. The struggles of the current coalition government about protracting a package of rights reforms and in particular the debate about the repeal of capital punishment and the expansion of civil rights are not all but some examples of the change.

While the political atmosphere has gone through such crucial changes, the Islamist groups have also mutated both in ideological and sociological terms that have resulted in the heterogeneity among them. They varied from moderates defending the compatibility of Islam and democracy to radical ones criticizing West and modernity, from reformists to fundamentalists, from politicized groups to the ones who are talking about cultural Islam and from Islamist intellectuals to Islamist women movements. Some of them were affected very much by the changes and followed the Western philosophical discourse; hence, the search for pluralism, the concepts of 'civil society' and 'consensus' became popular. 'Liberal-democratic Muslim' as an identity came to the scene as an alternative to the traditional conservative-nationalist Muslim identity. Only a small number of groups remained

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[32] Susan Strange, 'The Limits of Power', *Government and Opposition*, vol. 30, no. 3 (1995), p. 299.

marginal and stuck to their fight against the secular regime. Varieties of interpretations made every Islamist group stand in different positions regarding the contemporary debates on different issues. In the earlier times virtually no relationship between Islam and democracy was perceived; however, in the current atmosphere the compatibility of Islam and democracy has been seen possible by some, if not few.

Another feature of 1990s about the change in Islamism was the visibility and active participation of Islamist women in the public sphere.[33] They started to organize and form common platforms to discuss the status and rights of women in Islam, the political problems of Turkey, and woman and human rights. They published their own magazines such as *Kadın ve Aile* (Woman and Family), *Bizim Aile* (Our Family), and *Mektup* (Letter). Furthermore, they set up some umbrella platforms such as *Gökkuşağı Istanbul Kadın Platformu* (Rainbow Istanbul Women Platform), *Ankara Başkent Kadın Platformu* (Ankara Capital-City Women Platform) and other platforms in Antalya, Bursa, Diyarbakır, Kayseri, and Konya, which included many civil society organizations.[34] Those establishments were the indicators of their desire to be heard. The politicization of the headscarf issue in turn politicized Islamist women and some of them joined the Welfare Party. The establishment of *Hanımlar Komisyonu* (the Ladies' Commission) was another distinctive transformation of the 1990s.

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[33] Nilüfer Göle, 'Secularism and Islamism in Turkey: The Making of Elites and Counter-Elites', *Middle East Journal*, vol. 51, no. 1 (Winter 1997), p. 57.
[34] Kenan Çayır, 'İslamcı Bir Sivil Toplum Örgütü: Gökkuşağı İstanbul Kadın Platformu' in *İslam'ın Yeni Kamusal Yüzleri: Bir Atölye Çalışması*, Nilüfer Göle, ed. (İstanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2000), p. 54.

Chapter Two

ERBAKAN: CHANGING WITHOUT CHANGE

Background and the Evolution of Erbakan's Political Line

Necmettin Erbakan was born in Sinop in 1926 as the first son of his father's second marriage. Since his father was aggravated felony judge (*ağır ceza reisi*), he had the chance to get a good education. He passed the entrance exam of Istanbul Technical University (ITU) and started his university education in the Department of Mechanical Engineering. Erbakan made research in Aachen Technical University during his post-doctoral studies between 1951 and 1954. When he returned to Turkey, he became the youngest associate professor of Turkey and he continued his academic career. Erbakan's expertise on heavy war machines later on showed itself in his 'heavy industry' (*ağır sanayi*) slogan. In the 1960s, he joined some other entrepreneurs who were the disciples of M. Zahid Kotku and they set up the first motor factory of Turkey called *Gümüş Motor*. Erbakan accepted Kotku as his spiritual guide and very often went to the latter's *dergah* (seminary) in order to benefit from his guide's opinions. Kotku had impact on shaping Erbakan's political line in the beginning or at least Erbakan pretended to be so, but later he gradually deviated from Kotku's principles.

Erbakan actively took part in many associations before his political career started. First, he became the chairman of the Mechanical Engineers' Association. Afterwards, he joined the Turkish Union of Commerce, Industry, Maritime Trade, and Trade Exchange and worked as Secretary General of the Union. Since he represented the interests of the small tradesmen and artisans, he fought for their rights in the union. Thus, he came to a point of being at odds with the big capital holders in Istanbul. Erbakan found himself in the very center of that political conflict which later increased his interest in active politics. His candidacy to the presidency of the union received support from nearly all subgroups in the so-called 'rightist circles' (*sağcı kesim*). The conservative, nationalist and Islamist groups united around that issue to defend the rights of Anatolian capital owners against the Istanbulian big industrialists. That was the mere reflection of the center-periphery cleavage in economic terms and, to some extent, the indication of rising salience of secular-religious cleavage. Erbakan's 'national view' (*milli görüş*) philosophy began to be shaped parallel to those developments.

After Erbakan was expelled from the presidency of the union due to the pressure coming from the big industrialists and tradesmen, he tried his chance in the Justice Party (*Adalet Partisi* –AP). However, Süleyman Demirel, the leader of the party, vetoed his joining the party. That forced Erbakan to look for different alternatives, which ended with his organizing Independents' Movement (*Bağımsızlar Hareketi*). Nonetheless, he was the only independent elected deputy from Konya. In 1970, Erbakan with some other deputies who had left the AP founded a new party named National Order Party (*Milli Nizam Partisi* – MNP) that aimed at the

Islamicization of cultural and political life in Turkey. The 'national view' was the main pillar of the party program, which was defined as the necessity to subscribe to Islamic values in order to make progress. Industrialization and cooperation with Islamic countries were given importance. Moreover, Islamic World Union was emphasized as an alternative to the European Economic Community.

The political life of the MNP was not very long. The Constitutional Court closed the party on 20 May 1971 with the claim of being contrary to the reforms of Atatürk and the principle of secularism. The 1971 Memorandum by the military targeted not only Islamists but also all the other extremists that were seen as a threat to the indivisibility of Turkey and to the secular regime. Erbakan left for Switzerland. In October 1972, the National Salvation Party (*Milli Selamet Partisi* – MSP) was established as a successor to the MNP, but this time under the leadership of Süleyman Emre. However, Emre resigned a week after the 1973 national elections and Erbakan again became the leader of the party.

Erbakan's return to Turkey created some speculations to the effect that some generals called upon him to set up a new party with the objective of weakening the AP of Demirel.

In the 1973 national elections the Republican People's Party (*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi* – CHP) obtained the largest number of votes (33.3 percent). It was also an unexpected success for the MSP with 11.8 percent of the votes. The CHP under Bülent Ecevit formed a coalition government with Erbakan's MSP on January 1974. Thus the party became one part of the government and Erbakan the deputy prime minister. That one-year coalition caused splits in the Islamist front. Many rightist

groups criticized Erbakan harshly about forming a coalition government with the CHP. Necip Fazıl Kısakürek who was influential in the development of the political opinions of Erbakan, took his support back and accused him of using *Shari'a* without sincerity for the sake of party interests in addition to take the part in government[35]. Erbakan's spiritual leader Kotku was also discontented with Erbakan's political actions. He said that Erbakan did not only what he advised to do but also what he warned Erbakan not to do.[36]

Nine months after the Cyprus Operation of 1974 the coalition government of the CHP and the MSP was dissolved. Since Ecevit failed to form another government, the following three years became the years of the Nationalist Front Governments (*Milliyetçi Cephe Hükümetleri*).[37] Erbakan could not work in harmony with Demirel during the first Nationalist Front government. The MSP also took part in the second Nationalist Front. The 1977 elections were surprising for Erbakan since there was an important decrease in the percentages of the votes from 11.8 percent to 8.6 percent and in the number of deputies from 48 to 24. Although the party successfully increased its supporters in the Southeast, the loss of support from the Islamist groups led to the decrease. The elections enabled the CHP to come to power again. However, after the 1979 elections for the Senate it became evident that there was a dramatic drop in support for the party. Due to the loss of majority, Ecevit had to resign. Demirel came to power with a minority government on 12 November 1979.

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[35] Necip Fazıl Kısakürek, *Rapor 4* (İstanbul: Büyük Doğu Yayınları, 1978), p. 31.
[36] Hakkı Öznur, *Ülkücü Hareket*, vol. 6 (Ankara: Alternatif Yayınları, 1999), p. 666.
[37] The Nationalist Front Governments (March 1975-December 1977) were broad-based coalition governments. The first NFG included the AP, the Nationalist Action Party (*Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi* – MHP), the MSP and the Republican Reliance Party (*Cumhuriyetçi Güven Partisi* –CGP). It was only the CGP that did not join the second NFG.

Erbakan's giving support to the minority government of Demirel in the vote of confidence was another surprising turn of. When and why Erbakan reversed his position was beyond comprehension.

The military coup of 1980 brought the end of the MSP as well as the other parties. One of the stimuli of the intervention, as it was claimed, was the Shari'a slogan heard in the Konya meeting of the MSP. The main aim of the coup was protecting country from all kinds of extreme ideologies that were considered hazardous for the existence of regime. Although, radical Islamists were suppressed, Islam became instrumental for the generals. They believed that one of the solutions to the problem of exploiting religion in politics would be providing religious education under the control of the state[38]. Opening new prayer leader and preacher schools, making religious courses compulsory in the secondary schools, and building new mosques in order to keep political Islam under control, in fact gave chance to Islam to flourish in the society under the surveillance and allowance of the state. That period would give birth to Islamic revivalism but in a different format in the following years.

Erbakan was among the banned politicians of the post-1980 period. Until the nation-wide referendum of 1987, which enabled him to return to active politics, he indirectly ruled the new party as the shadow leader. The Welfare Party (*Refah Partisi* – RP), the successor to the MSP, was established in 1983, but could not enter the 1983 general elections. First because of procedural obstacles the party could not be set up earlier and by that way missed the chance to enter the elections. Second, the NSC allowed only three new parties to contest in the elections. Neither socialist nor

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[38] Fehmi Çalmuk, *Selamun Aleyküm Komutanım* (Ankara: Kim, 2000), p. 90.

religious oriented parties were permitted and the RP was among the excluded ones. However, the party from then on started to organize and increase the number of its supporters gradually. The cadres of the RP tried to appeal to a larger electorate with an objective of changing their voter profile. The ties with the İskenderpaşa Seminary became weaker especially after the death of Kotku in 1980. Erbakan did not take the advice of new Sheikh, Mahmut Esad Coşan who was also an academician, as important.

During 1990s the discourse of the party went under important transformations and reached to percentages and numbers that an Islamist party did not even dream of. In the general elections held in 1991 the RP, made an alliance with the MHP and the Democratic Reformist Party (*Islahatçı Demokrasi Partisi* – IDP). By that way they could pass the 10 percent threshold. The RP gained 62 seats in the parliament. In the 1994 local elections the party captured the metropolitan municipalities of Ankara and Istanbul as well as 300 others in small towns and cities. The 1995 general elections was a real victory for the RP. It became the largest political party in the parliament with 158 deputies and 22 percent of overall votes. Erbakan and Tansu Çiller (the leader of the True Path Party (*Doğru Yol Partisi* – DYP)) formed a coalition government in June 1996. It was the first time that an Islamic-oriented party has become the largest partner of the government, and Erbakan prime minister. However, the party could not escape from closure. Moreover, on 16 January 1998, Erbakan was sentenced to a five-year prohibition from active politics.

It was impossible to make him uninvolved with party politics and he continued behaving as the leader behind the scenes. However, he failed to suppress the voice of

the opposition in the party and the party finally split into two: Conservatives (*Gelenekçiler*) joined under the roof of the Felicity Party (*Saadet Partisi* - SP) and the so-called Innovators (*Yenilikçiler*) set up the Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi* - AKP). It was the first time that Erbakan's absolute leadership was challenged directly by the opposition coming from the party ranks. From time to time there emerged opposing voices in the party but they all ended up either strengthening the position of Erbakan in the eyes of the party members or purification by dismissing the critical voices.

Views on Secularism and Democracy

Erbakan never seemed to object the principle of secularism but what he always did was to criticize the practice of secularism in Turkey. In 1973, as an original view, he suggested that 'secularism is a part of our 'national'[39] history. For him, the different interpretations of the four Sect *Imams* on the same issue exemplify this reality because secularism as a word consists of two meanings. One of them is the acceptance of others apart from us and the other is the necessity to believe that they deserve the equal respect.[40] Although he did not say it explicitly, he seemed to attribute to the practice of secularism in Turkey an animosity against Islam: 'Voting for the MSP is equal to declaring that we do not want hatred against religion.'[41]

One can deduce from his early statements that he was a supporter of majoritarian democracy. In his speech in Mecca during the pilgrimage period in 1979,

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[39] In his political terminology, 'national' encompasses everything related to Islam, as it can be understood from the terms 'national view' (*milli görüş*), 'national salvation', etc. That is why he classified Sect *Imams* as national.
[40] Çalmuk, *Selamun Aleyküm Komutanım*, p. 18.
[41] Ibid*.*, p. 142.

he pointed out that the establishment of the sovereignty of Islam would only be possible through setting up laws which would be realized only by occupying the seats of the parliament.[42] That was the rationale behind setting up their party. From then on, Erbakan started to take democracy as a means to reach the 'order of happiness' (*saadet nizamı*).[43] He reacted against the image of a 'superior West' by emphasizing the superiority of Islam as a civilization and by arguing compatibility between Islam and science.[44] Nonetheless, in an article of him in *Milli Gazete* he appreciated the advancement of West especially in relation to the issues of freedom of conscience and freedom of religion.[45]

> There is the principle of human rights. There is the notion of freedom of thought. There is democracy. We will be national. We will be social. Within this regime we will make progress in Turkey. If we take these concepts as the base I hope we will recover from the turmoil because everything starts with brotherhood. There is no benefit for our nation to incite people. Let's define the main pillar of the third period as the practice of the Western type freedom of thought. [46]

In the 1977 national elections, the votes of the MSP were eroded and Erbakan began to talk in a more radical and anti-system mode: 'Our bonds with the Qur'an were cut fifty years ago…The Qur'an is not sovereign anymore. To establish the domination of the Qur'an again is the mission of all the Muslims. Everyone should struggle to make this possible. How can we make the Qur'an supreme? By *jihad*

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[42] Turhan Dilligil, *Erbakancılık ve Erbakan* (Ankara: Onur, 1994), pp. 55-56. (The Urfa speech of Erbakan was taken from the files of Ankara Marshall Law Command: Military Court I.)
[43] Hasan Hüseyin Ceylan, *Erbakan ve Türkiye'nin Temel Meseleleri* (Ankara: Rehber Yayıncılık, 1991), p. 46.
[44] Türker Alkan, 'The National Salvation Party in Turkey' in *Islam and Politics in the Modern Middle East*, Metin Heper and Raphael Israeli, eds. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1984), p. 89.
[45] Ibid*., p.*96.
[46] Çalmuk, *Selamun Aleyküm Komutanım*, pp. 18-19.

(holy war)!'[47] *Jihad* is commonly understood as armed struggle in the name of Allah against the infidels and apostates. The intention is not to destroy but to subdue the infidel world. However, in Islamic terminology there are two kinds of *jihad*: one of them is lower *jihad* that is described as above and the other is higher *jihad* (*ekber jihad*) that is fighting against *nefs* (lower instincts). It is clear that Erbakan in his speech used *jihad* to denote armed struggle against the non-believers. Nonetheless, in a country like Turkey that its population is mostly Muslim, his call for *jihad* was not logical but could only be a tactic to spark the religious fervor of Islamist groups for the sake of more votes. The increase of the religious demands in the political arena brought the discourse of the *Shari'a* to the agendas of Islamist politicians. With the aim of appealing those Islamic masses, Erbakan began to use Islamic terminology together with non-Islamic one. Making *jihad* and *Shari'a* slogans, later made those terms nothing more than empty notions. The aim of using the terms to unify Islamic masses under the roof of his party ironically caused divisions in the Islamist front. By that way, Erbakan not only received reactions from the secular elites but the other Islamist groups as well. Those two-sided reactions forced Erbakan to formulate a new strategy with milder, pro-system discourse.

Erbakan realized the importance of the global changes such as the growing importance of supranational allies and the restoring its hegemonic power of the USA and thus backpedaled on his extreme position. Before, he had made promises for Turkey's withdrawal from NATO and the Customs Union and formulated an

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[47] Dilligil, *Erbakancılık ve Erbakan*, p. 56.

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alternative alliance in the Islamic world.[48] Later, while in power, he signed military agreements with Israel and tried to establish friendly relations with Turkey's Western allies. However, the radical groups in the party continued to have an anti-Semite position, which resurfaced in the Jerusalem Programs, organized by the branches of the party. It is interesting that those programs on Jerusalem troubled Erbakan and his friends and became a reason for military to intervene in politics. When the American ambassador visited the Welfare Party, Erbakan used a moderate language because he wanted to change the skeptical look of America about his party. Being supported by the USA became so much important that he even made an analogy between the Welfare Party and the Democratic Party of the 1940s, which had established good ties with the USA.[49]

The search for pluralism, the concepts of civil society and consensus became popular among the Islamist intellectuals in the 1990s. Novel identities came to the fore that did not previously exist such as 'liberal-democratic Muslim'.[50] Those were the outcomes of accepting diversity and recognizing ethnic and religious differences that have led to the ascendancy of identity politics. Erbakan has affected or more truly pretended to be affected by these changes. Change could clearly be observed in the Fourth Congress of the RP in 1993. In the opening speech, Erbakan made a distinction between plural democracy and democracy while explaining his project of 'just order' (*adil düzen*). He claimed that, in Turkey, instead of 'real democracy' there is 'guided democracy' (*güdümlü demokrasi*), of 'plural democracy' 'a regime of

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[48] Soner Yalçın, *Hangi Erbakan* (Ankara: Başak Yayınları, 1994), p. 142 (From his speech in the meeting of The Youth Assembly of Islam Countries in 1980).
[49] Aksiyon (Ankara weekly), 8-14 April , 1995.
[50] Ruşen Çakır, *Ne Şeriat Ne Demokrasi: Refah Partisini Anlamak* (İstanbul: Metis Yayınları, 1994), p. 111.

tyranny' (*tahakküm düzeni*). For him, the recognition of the Kurdish identity and the guaranteeing of their cultural rights were necessary. Furthermore, he talked about the necessity of providing freedom for Alevis to live according to their beliefs.[51] The latter was more astonishing because Alevis had been the less likely group that the RP targeted. The speech that Erbakan delivered was not his own but rather prepared by two intellectuals of the party.[52] Thus, the speech could not be taken as evidence that Erbakan had changed. It could be interpreted as an election maneuver just as it might be the consequence of the rise of the importance of Islamist intellectuals inside the party ranks. Sometimes Erbakan spoke according to the expectations of different supporters of the party that led to paradoxical and controversial statements. This was not unexpected since the party was a conjectural unity of different identities, which Ali Bayramoğlu categorized as: sincere Muslims, Islamists, Sunni Kurds, nationalist-conservative Central Anatolian people, urban poor, radicals in *varoş* (outskirts of the city), lower middle classes, and religious small tradesmen in Anatolia .[53]

The terminology that Erbakan insistently used in previous times such as *jihad*, the World Islamic Union did not disappear but from time to time appeared in his discourse. His lexis has gone through dramatic changes. In a text that he wrote, he defined democracy as 'a means' to the end of the establishment of the order of happiness while in another place some time after the February 28 process has begun, he stated that the RP would return power in democratic terms just as it came by

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[51] Refah Partisi, *4. Büyük Kongre Genel Başkan Necmettin Erbakan'ın Konuşması* (Ankara: Refah Partisi, 1994).

[52] Bahri Zengin, the architect of 'Just Order', and Ali Bulaç, the defender of the idea of multiple-law society (*çok hukuklu toplum)*.

[53] Ali Bayramoğlu, *Türkiye'de İslami Hareket: Sosyolojik Bir Bakış (1994-2000)* (İstanbul: Patika, 2001), p. 76.

elections.[54] Becoming victorious in the 1994 local and 1995 national elections, increased dizziness on his part and, hence, the ebb and flow in his statements continued. His belief in the will of the people -- indeed will of the believers -- was so exaggerated that he even used the term to justify the anti-democratic ambitions: 'We shall come to power. Whether it will through the shedding of blood or not is an open question. Sixty million will decide.' [55]

As a continuation of his previous understanding, he suggested the striking out of secularism from the constitution.[56] Later, he again equated secularism with enmity against religion.[57] One day before the famous National Security Council (MGK) meeting on 28 February 1997, he named the Article 24 of the Constitution as the article of fascist secularism[58]. In his defence, he pointed out that deviating from the principle of secularism would not occur by the words or ideas but when they turn into actions.[59] He made a very interesting analogy between the movement of car and its brakes in which the former symbolizes freedom of speech while the latter is the symbol for secularism: 'The brakes cannot be seen as the car. The movement of the car cannot be prevented. Without brakes it is impossible to drive the car.' [60] It is obvious that his opinion about considering freedom of speech and freedom of thought as inseparable parts of secularism was still unchanged. Secularism, he has in mind, is only related to guaranteeing freedom of religion and conscience especially to 'Muslims willing to live as they believe'. The February 28 recommendations have

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[54] *Milliyet* (Istanbul daily), 8 March, 1997.
[55] Necmettin Erbakan, *Refah Partisi Savunması* (İstanbul: Fast Yayıncılık, 1997), p. 148.
[56] *Vakit*, 12 December 1993.
[57] *Milli Gazete*, 26 January 1997.
[58] *Yeni Yüzyıl* (Istanbul daily), 28 February 1997.
[59] Necmettin Erbakan, *Refah Partisi Savunması*, p. 111.
[60] *Zaman* (Istanbul daily), 9 February 1997.

moderated the radical sides of Erbakan's political language. He even gave orders to the party ranks about avoiding radical actions. He tried to convince them that their resignation would be the best solution since by that way they could rescue the regime.[61] The way he gave statements to foreign press also changed sharply: 'Turkey is a Muslim country as well as a secular and democratic one.'[62]

The speech that Erbakan made during the Fourth Congress of the RP in 1993 would be a good example to unearth the inconsistencies between his opinions and praxis. He mostly talked about the logic of 'just order' in that speech. The backbone of that project was explained as plural democracy. The protection of the rights of 'one' against 'thousand' was in line with plural democracy. The ethnic and religious groups (Kurds and Alevis) that the party had not taken as target groups before were now embraced at that congress. Erbakan blamed the democracy in Turkey as being the 'tyranny of 51 percent over 49 percent'[63] which meant that Turkish democracy was majoritarian and Erbakan objected to this kind of democracy, However, during the debates on the mosque that was planned to be built in Taksim Square in Istanbul he stated: 'Now you will talk about the mosque. Who are you? 3 percent. You have no right to talk.'[64]

Erbakan defended the idea that once he criticized but now with a small difference in percentages. The tyranny of 51 percent was replaced by the tyranny of 97 percent in his statement. His vision of identity politics was authoritarian in the

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[61] *Milliyet*, 8 March 1997.
[62]*Observer*, 9 May 1997.
[63] Serdar Şen, *Refah Partisi'nin Teori ve Pratiği* (Istanbul: Sarmal, 1995), p. 60.
[64] *Milli Gazete*, 20 January 1997.

sense that a society consisting of a predominantly Muslim population was divided into two conflicting camps as believers and non-believers.

In many places, he used such concepts, the will of people, referendum, and veto by people as the fundamental components of democracy while inside the party he came closer to an authoritarian line. Once in his speech he quoted from Mevlana with an addition of his view in the end: 'Come, regardless of your background, come, whatever you are you should come. (The part that he added) Come and internalize our identity in due time.'[65] This quotation gives some clues about his views on inner-party democracy. What he has in mind is an inflexible party structure. The different values of newcomers are not welcomed. The party supplies an identity to the members who are expected to internalize it. He injected 'family party' notion into the minds of party members.

While he insists on using freedom of thought and freedom of conscience as important pillars of secularism, those freedoms are not thought for everybody. The group that deserves the freedoms in his understanding is composed of the Muslims in general 'who are not allowed to live as they believe', in particular the girls with headscarves 'that are not given the permission to enter university campuses and classes with that headgear'. At some points he turns out to be an absolutist and homogenizer: 'If 99 percent of Turkey is Muslim then the administrators should be devoted Muslims.'[66]

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[65] Yavuz, 'Political Islam and the Welfare Party in Turkey', p. 75.
[66] Çakır, *Ne Şeriat Ne Demokrasi*, p. 206.

When the issue was about women, Erbakan and the RP always defended the idea that women could not take an active role in the decision-making mechanisms.[67] However, the demands coming from the Islamist women made them search for ways that were least problematic and most efficient for the patriarchal system of the party.

With the initiation of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, the leader of the Istanbul branch, the first Ladies' commission was set up in the late 1980s. These commissions that followed it, played a vital role beginning with the 1994 local elections. Their success was noticed by Erbakan and, with his instructions, the commissions spread to all local organizations of the party.

However, at that time, that was all for the Islamist women in the party. No woman was allowed to be even a candidate either for deputy or mayoralty. When it became a requirement to have women in the decision-making mechanisms of the party, the women that were preferred were mostly the new transfers coming from non-Islamic backgrounds with the exception of Merve Kavakçı[68] who is the daughter of a close friend of Erbakan. He tried to keep the women commissions under control by staffing them with the wives, daughters, and relatives of the party administrators, which was a continuation of his 'family party' understanding.

Erbakan and the Military

It is obvious that military with the role of being the guarantor of the republic and especially the secular regime that Atatürk founded could not easily tolerate the

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[67] Ruşen Çakır, *Direniş ve İtaat: İki İktidar Arasında İslamcı Kadın* (İstanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2000), p. 23.
[68] Kavakçı was elected deputy from İstanbul in the 1999 national elections. She came to the swearing-in ceremony with her hair covered. It was the first time that a female deputy wearing headscarf has entered the Parliament.

Islamist discourse that Erbakan used explicitly from time to time. Erbakan experienced the adverse implications for him and his party of the military interventions. His parties were closed down and he himself was banned from politics.

However, he was always cautious when the issue was about the military. The relationship between the military and Erbakan are hard to understand in some points. The claims about the generals' role in bringing Erbakan back to the Turkish politics after the military memorandum of 1971 or the fact that the National Unionists (*Milli Birlikçiler*) saved Erbakan from the danger of losing his political immunity in 1977 with the amendments in the Political Parties Law make the connection more complex. In parallel with the ebb and flow in the political views of Erbakan, the liaison of him with the military has been modified in different periods.

One of the most important initiatives of the CHP-MSP coalition government was the Cyprus Operation for the restoration of peace and order in 1974. That was a courageous act since it meant a possible political isolation in the world political community. Ecevit was decisive from the very beginning even though some cabinet members and some in the opposition were skeptical about the aftermath of the operation. After the operation the popularity of Ecevit reached to the highest level. That made Erbakan carry out anti-propaganda that Ecevit had not been sure whether the operation should be made or not. Erbakan claimed that the MSP was in favor of that move similar to the military .[69] The posture of Erbakan in that issue pleased the generals. Sharing the same opinion made them cooperate. The crisis in the Council of Ministers was terminated with the mediating role of the generals. They convinced

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[69] Ceylan, *Erbakan ve Türkiye'nin Temel Meseleleri*, pp. 61-62.

Ecevit and his party about the necessity of the operation. What Erbakan wanted to show by this particular account of events was that the MSP was in harmony with the generals. It was true that the coalition government and the military together carried out a successful operation; however, it could be partially true to say that only one part of the coalition was in harmony with the Armed Forces. At the time, the army commander Semih Sancar said: 'We are soldiers. You are the ones who have the authority in decision-making. If you say shoot we will, if you say hold we will.'[70] Erbakan and his friends interpreted it as if the words of General Sancar had been addressed to Erbakan.

Once Erbakan understood that the victory of Cyprus Operation was a real opportunity to increase his popularity and that of his party, Erbakan did not hesitate to draw a picture that he was the Conqueror of Cyprus (*Kıbrıs Fatihi*). During the days of meetings in Geneva[71] where the political future of Cyprus was discussed, he made speeches that could possibly be used against Turkey in the conference. There was a possibility that the image of the Peace Operation that was made in order to bring peace and order to the island by terminating the massacres into an outright 'invasion'. Erbakan's using 'the right to conquer' (*fetih hakkı*) all of the island in his speeches, his giving promises about the Turkish investments in Cyprus, his insistence on the division of the island as a solution and the Ministry of Internal Affairs

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[70] Çalmuk, *Selamun Aleyküm Komutanım*, p. 32.
[71] The first Geneva Conference began on July 25, 1974 with the participation of the delegates of three guarantor countries of Cyprus--Turkey, Greece and Britain. However, due to the stalemate the conference recessed. The delegates reconvened with the efforts of the U.S. Secretary of State, Henry Kissenger. The first Geneva Declaration was signed. However, the second operation of Turkey on the island led to the convention of the delegates again on August 8, 1974.

appointing a governor to Girne in Cyprus[72] resulted in nothing but a possible loss of positive image that Turkey was right to intervene to what was going on on the island as one of the Guarantor States. Erbakan's and his party's words and deeds disturbed both Ecevit and the generals, the latter even warned him.[73]

Erbakan did not want to lose any opportunity to get the support of the generals. Hence, he gave a briefing about his project on heavy industry to the general members of National Unity Committee, which they found interesting. Later Erbakan said that the briefing was so positive that the generals even began to look at Erbakan in a different light. He claimed that one of the generals named Erbakan as the second Atatürk who was working for an economically independent Turkey, while another promised to be Erbakan's assistant whenever he needed him.[74] There is no record to be sure of the validity of this account.

Chief of the General Staff, Kenan Evren, opposed Erbakan's heavy industry project. He thought that it was nothing but utopia. What made Evren negative about Erbakan was his term West/Christian Club.[75] In the late 1970s, the attitude of the military turned to negative in spite of Erbakan's attempts to establish friendly ties with the generals. For that purpose, his party even asked Evren to become the president. Nevertheless, such efforts were in vain; Erbakan's and his colleagues' political moves were watched with skepticism. Pro-*Shari'a* slogans, anti-regime

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[72] Mehmet Ali Birand, *Otuz Sıcak Gün* (İstanbul: Milliyet Yayınları, 1975), p. 218.

[73] Ibid., *p.*142. Erbakan insisted on that the only possible solution on the island would be 'partition'. He criticized his coalition partner about preventing the annexation of the whole island. Since his words led to a negative image that the real intention of Turkey was to invade the island, Erbakan was warned not to make such statements by President, Fahri Korutürk and Chief of the General Staff, Semih Sancar.

[74] Çalmuk, *Selamun Aleyküm Komutanım*, p. 40.

[75] Ibid., p. 48.

statements, and violent activities of *Akıncılar* (Raiders)[76] disturbed the military. Erbakan's not participating in the national ceremonies was interpreted as enmity against Atatürk and the Republican regime. The anxiety of the possible spread of the Iran revolution to Turkey increased the skeptical looks at Erbakan and his party. According to the generals,[77] Erbakan and Ecevit were responsible for the anarchical and polarized atmosphere because of the declaration of the general amnesty during the CHP-MSP coalition government. The anti-Semite Jerusalem Meeting in Konya was the last straw. The military could not tolerate it anymore and took the power into its own hands in September 1980.

In the second half of the 1980s, Erbakan continued his previous style and produced new projects in order to win the sympathy of the generals. The emphasis on an independent defense industry could not be very successful for this purpose. In his Trabzon speech Evren stated that the military have always had the right to intervene during the chaotic periods.[78] Erbakan responded in a press conference that it is true that in turbulent periods the military would cooperate with the other constitutional institutions. However, he added, that is not the main mission of the Armed Forces to make coups and close parties which are the symbols of the will of the people.[79] Erbakan was careful and restrained even when he criticized the military.

Beginning with the 1990s, Erbakan started to join the ceremonies in Atatürk's Mausoleum in Ankara in order not to attract a negative reaction from the secular elites. Nonetheless, the 1990s became the years that Erbakan and the generals clashed

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[76] The separate youth branch of the party that actively participated the fights with other political groups.

[77] Birand, *Otuz Sıcak Gün*, pp. 43-44.

[78] Kenan Evren, *Zorlu Yıllarım*, vol. 2 (İstanbul: Milliyet Yayınları, 1994), p. 98.

[79] Çalmuk, *Selamun Aleyküm Komutanım*, p. 101.

on many issues. Erbakan was against sending troops to the United Nations Peace Corps in Somalia because he claimed that the corps was killing innocent Muslims there. That assertion was not taken seriously by the military. The other controversial issue between the military and Erbakan was the militaristic solution in the Southeast. By saying that in the operations against terror, the distinction between the innocent and the guilty was not properly done, he criticized the Special War Methods Agency and the Emergency Rule Government in the region (OHAL). Until he came to power, he preferred objecting both practices that had been recommended by the National Security Council.

Another strategy of Erbakan was recruiting some retired generals to the party ranks, which was not very effective in reality. He congratulated Chief of the General Staff, Doğan Güreş, because of his sending letters to the Western countries in which he criticized their insensitivity to the ethnic cleansing taking place in Bosnia and Azerbaijan. Erbakan equated that attempt with the RP's discourse about criticizing "imitator" West.[80] However, Güreş was not pleased with that statement and rejected sharing the same opinions with the RP.

Despite Erbakan's constant efforts, the military refused to have a dialogue with him. The generals even began to state that they saw reactionary, fundamentalist movements more dangerous than the separatist PKK, the Kurdistan Workers Party.[81] The indivisibility of the territorial integrity of the country and the secular regime were the two important things that military was resolved to safeguard.

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[80] *Türkiye* (Istanbul daily), 17 February 1994.
[81] Cumhuriyet (Istanbul daily), 1 April 1994.

That became quite apparent in the February 28 meeting of National Security Council. With the recommendations made in that meeting, Erbakan was given an ultimatum due to the 'relentless pro-*Shari'a* actions and hostility against the secular order'. His humiliation by Muammar Qaddafi during his Libya visit, the unsuccessful Iran visit, his announcing the support of the government for building mosque in Taksim Square in Istanbul and in Çankaya in Ankara and the famous dinner at the break of fast (*iftar*) at the Prime Minister's residence that many *tarikat* leaders were invited disturbed the secular elites, in particular the generals.

In the summer of 1996, the military denied the entrance of the members of the RP to an army graduation ceremony on the grounds that they were not properly dressed (they had Islamic beards and headscarves).[82] On 11 June 1997, the West Study Group (*Batı Çalışma Grubu*) within the military was set up for monitoring the infiltration of Islamic fundamentalists into the civil service. In February 1997, pro-Islamic demonstrations against Zionism took place, in the so-called Jerusalem Night (*Kudüs Gecesi*) that was organized by the municipality of Sincan, a district of Ankara. The reaction of the army was very strong; tanks railed through the streets of the town.

All those events had led to the 28 February 1997 crisis. The NSC demands were designed under the name of the NSC recommendations in order to protect secularism. At first Erbakan refused to ratify the proposals, but later he noticed that he had no chance but to sign. Nevertheless, he came under heavy criticisms. He was blamed for inciting people's religious feelings for the sake of coming to power and dividing the

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[82] Shankland, *Islam and Society in Turkey*, p. 110.

society into two camps that deepened the polarization and enmity in the country. Erbakan got the message and resigned from the coalition government. That time, nothing or no one saved him even his Machiavellian ability to extricate himself from difficult situations easily could not help him. Erbakan always tried to draw a picture as if his political line or his party had no problem with the Turkish military. However, it is clear that the generals have been deeply displeased with his words and deeds. They have frequently shown their displeasure and discontentment through press briefings and warning speeches at formal occasions.

Chapter Three

ERDOĞAN: CHANGE OR CONTINUITY

Background and the Evolution of Erdoğan's Political Line

Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, the leader of the newly established AKP, is the second political figure in the analysis. Erdoğan was born in Istanbul in 1954 as a son of a low-income family that had migrated from the Black Sea region. Since the family's income level was not so high, Erdoğan sold lemonade and sesame rings on the street in order to support his family. In line with the family's conservative and religious life he went to a Prayer Leader and Preacher School that has had an enduring impact over his personality. At that time, he became so pious that he was called *hodja*, or spiritual leader, among his friends. He got his B.A. degree in economics and trade at Marmara University in 1980.

Another influential factor on the development of Erdoğan's personality is his relationship with *Nakşibendi* order. Like Erbakan he attended the meetings and talks in the *İskenderpaşa* Seminary, which was headed by Mehmet Zahid Kotku at that time. Kotku was the Skeikh of one branch of *Nakşibendi* called *Gümüşhanevi*. Their giving importance to moral values and especially to wisdom and science has had great influence on Erdoğan. For the *dergah,* politics is important and Muslims are

responsible and charged with socio-political issues.[83] Politics has primacy because only politically organized Muslims can be effective in preserving their rights and expanding their religious freedoms.[84]. A Muslim in that sense should be participant and active. They value patriotism, loyalty to moral and national values, fraternity and toleration, and trustworthiness and merit. They favor the rule of wise and honest leaders and harshly criticize one-man rule that reminds sultanic regime.[85] As it is understood the *dergah* is very much fond of politics. It is active in political matters and has relationship with political parties. It played important role in the establishment of first, an Islamic-oriented political party, the MNP, and later a moderate center party, the ANAP. The interesting thing is that it is influential upon university students and many of the students influenced by it became part of Turkish politics, the famous ones being Turgut Özal and Necmettin Erbakan.

Starting from the early days of his adolescence, beside his professional football experience in a team sponsored by the city's transport authority, Erdoğan was highly interested in trade and politics. He joined the Islamic political movement at 15 as a member of the National View Association (*Milli Görüş Teşkilatı*), which opened the way to his following posts in the consecutive parties of National View and Erbakan. While he was a student in the Prayer Leader and Preacher School, he was responsible of the Secondary School branch of the National Union of Turkish Students (*Milli Türk Talebe Birliği*). After leading the Beyoğlu branch of the RP for one-year term in 1984, he was appointed to the head of the Provincial Party Organization in Istanbul in

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[83] See http://gumushkhanawidargah.8m/byazilar/islam/i9006.html for M. Esad Coşan's articles on the magazine, *Islam*.
[84] Ibid.
[85] http://gumushkhanawidargah.8m/byazilar/islam/i9007.html.

1985. In 1994, Erdoğan had been elected mayor of Turkey's biggest city, Istanbul, with a population of over 10 million from the now-defunct RP. That was a real shock for the secular elites and the media in Turkey since that was considered as an important evidence of Islamic revivalism, posing a threat to the predominantly Muslim but nevertheless secular society. On the other hand, for the Islamic front that was the real victory of the *hak* (true) over *batıl* (misguided). Erbakan thought of the capture of the mayoralty as the second conquest of Istanbul and referred to Erdoğan as the conqueror.

During his mayoralty, Erdoğan tried to improve the life in Istanbul. He initiated projects to solve infrastructural problems of the city. Since Istanbul is the biggest metropolitan city of Turkey, it has had chronic problems. He improved water supply, cleared many squatter houses (*gecekondu*), tackled with pollution, and planted trees to make Istanbul green.[86] The policy that he implemented is not purely Islamization, but the creation of a kind of Ottoman renaissance.[87] His administration tried to awaken the traditional life of Ottoman Istanbul. What were mostly renovated were the historical monuments from Ottoman times. Many *köşk*s and *kasr*s (*Çamlıca Köşkü, Malta Köşkü, Hidiv Kasrı*, etc.) were restored and began to be run as restaurants or cafes by the municipality. In all of them authentic Turkish cuisine was served with only traditional drinks in an atmosphere of Ottoman ambiance. Erdoğan's admiration of Ottoman tradition was so high that he even sometimes used the term 'şehremini' as the title, which was the Ottoman equivalent of governor of Istanbul.

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[86] Megan Cox Gurdon, 'The Mild Face of Radical Islam?', *Christian Science Monitor*, vol. 88, no. 139, p.6

[87] Alev İnan Çınar, 'Refah Party and the City Administration of Istanbul: Liberal Islam, Localism and Hybridity', *New Perspectives on Turkey*, no. 16 (Spring 1997), p. 24.

It is argued that 'none of the policies and actions of the city have a direct bearing on the requirements of Islam as a religion' except the banning of alcohol in some restaurants run by the municipality.[88] The ban on alcohol was the most criticized policy of Erdoğan's administration. It was interpreted as the first step towards establishing an order based on *Shari'a* and as an anti-democratic move. However, he defended himself by saying that the action was rather a move to eliminate discrimination against practicing Muslims. The motive behind it was to create options for the practicing Muslims, that is, places where alcohol is not consumed. That was the continuation of his desire to look after the rights and freedoms of the 'oppressed'-- no matter who they were. After he was elected mayor of Istanbul, he stated that no one would be discriminated due to his/her political opinions and life styles.[89]

When the Constitutional Court banned the RP in January 1998 on charges of anti-secular activities, the mayor continued his career under the newly established FP, successor party to the RP. However, in April 1998, Erdoğan was sentenced to a ten-month prison sentence for a poem by Ziya Gökalp he quoted at a 1997 rally in Siirt. In the speech, he told that his 'reference was Islam' and it is his basic right to declare that fact freely like William J. Clinton who announced that his reference was the Bible as the President of the USA.[90] He also criticized the ban on headscarves in the universities and in other public places as being incompatible with the principles of a democratic and secular state. What put him into trouble was the line of the poem that read: 'The mosques are barracks, the minarets our bayonets, the domes our helmets,

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[88] Ibid., p. 37.
[89] Muhammed Pamuk, *Yasaklı Umut: Recep Tayyip Erdoğan* (İstanbul: Birey, 2001), p. 41.
[90] Ibid., pp. 87-95.

and the believers are soldiers'. He was charged with 'openly inciting public enmity and hatred by pointing out racial and social differences' in accordance with the Article 312 of the Turkish Penal Code.[91] With this sentence, he was removed from public office and also barred from competing in elections for life. He stayed in prison for four months, and the legal debate whether his political future terminated or not is still going on.

Recently several cases have been opened against him to make an attempt to destroy the constitutional secular order for his words in a speech delivered in Rize in the early 1990s. However he rejected all the allegations and stated that he believes in the indivisibility of Turkish state. He stressed the fact that neither he nor the other members of the AKP are after a religion-based state.[92] It seems that his previous speeches would continue to create problems for him in the foreseeable future.

As noted, after the closure of the RP, another version of it under a different name, the FP was established. In spite of all the efforts to give an image that the FP was different than the defunct RP especially on the issues of democracy and EU membership, the party could not escape from allegations that it became the center of actions against secular republic. The criticisms of the leader of the FP, Recai Kutan, and the other party members on the legal provisions that ban wearing headscarves in public offices especially on university campuses mounted the worries that the FP was a pro-*Shari'a* party. When Kavakçı refused to take off her headscarf during the oath ceremony in the Parliament, that was considered as a provocation which later led to a serious crisis. The FP was closed down by the Constitutional Court in June 2001 due

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[91] *Milliyet*, 26 September 26 1998.
[92] *Hürriyet* (Istanbul daily), 27 April 2002.

to 'the subversive attacks of the party on the secular establishment'.[93] In accordance with the court's decision, the FP's funds were confiscated and two of its deputies, Nazlı Ilıcak and Bekir Sobacı, were removed from their seats in Parliament and given a five-year-ban from active politics like the other three deputies that led to the closure by their words and deeds, Merve Kavakçı, Ramazan Yenidede, and Mehmet Sılay.

However, before soon, in the FP two opposing factions emerged – conservatives and innovators. After the closure of the party, the two groups set up two different parties. Conservatives are now in the SP while innovators or in other usage reformists in the AKP. Although Erbakan and Erdoğan shared the same fate and were banned from politics, the latter has become the leader of the AKP and has entered into the most brilliant days of his political career. Erdoğan, in the current situation, has become the most expected candidate approaching the office of prime ministry in the forthcoming elections, on November 3, 2002. He has realized that he has a chance to find the 'Islamist movement' a new route.

The February 28 process not only brought the collapse of the RP-DYP coalition but also convinced various groups that it is a necessity to take measures against 'political Islam'. Thus, it turned out to be a learning process for the Islamic groups. It is clear that there exists no way for them if they continue to insist on their earlier approach to some vital issues.

With a new movement, 'Movement of the Virtuous' (*Erdemliler Hareketi*), Erdoğan strived for leaving behind his negative image. He tried to stand closer to a more moderate line. After the establishment of the AKP in August 2001, it became

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[93] *Zaman*, 22 June 2001.

clear that what he wants to do is to reach a broader electorate, not only Islamists, but also rightists, nationalists, and even leftists which is very similar to what Özal aimed at during the early years of the ANAP by capturing the four different political tendencies. Erdoğan frequently stresses that the party is not a threat for the secular establishment.

The shorter name that was chosen for the party is meaningful. AK is the Turkish equivalent of white, which symbolizes cleanness. The party is claimed to be for openness and transparency as well as clean politics. In the party program, in the party principles, and in the foundation ceremony speech of Erdoğan, the emphasis is on justice and the rule of law, together with the loyalty to the fundamental principles of Turkish Republic. Man is defined as a 'free entity', and personal and societal freedoms are said to be the main goals of the party. Among the basic rights and freedoms, freedom of religion and conscience is given particular emphasis. The others that it considers vital are freedom of thought, freedom of speech, and the right to organize.[94] Religion is taken as a unifying element rather than a source of conflict and enmity. Secularism is defined as the impartiality of the state to any kind of religious and philosophical belief. The preservation of the rights and freedoms of believers and nonbelievers is an important tenet of secularism as a principle, which in turn would bring societal peace. Secularism restricts the state not the individual and, as such, is seen as a crucial pre-requisite for democracy.

The party claims that it is ready to carry different demands and sensitivities to the political space. It is open to whole society. Differences are recognized as richness;

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[94] www.akparti.com.tr/ilkeler

plural democracy finds its place in the party program. Not only the 'will of the believers', but also the will of the people is respected. The model of state in the understanding of the party is one that is small in structural terms, but functionally powerful meaning a less centralized more effective state. The party leaders assert that the AKP is for democratic, secular state where rule of law is the main principle. They claim that they are against the exploitation of religion. The administrators of the party avoid populism and opportunism, and instead favor accountability and transparency.[95]

Views on Secularism and Democracy

Turkey has been in a process of rapid transformation in recent decades. The changes have not been seen in only the economy, but nearly in every sphere. Before 1980s the political discourse was filled with radical and antagonistic rhetoric parallel to the polarized political atmosphere. There was a rigid separation between the groups based on ideological differences. However, starting from 1980s there emerged heterogeneity and diversity in the political discourse. 'An ideological shift emerged regarding the perception of the West and the self definition of the political elites.'[96] Many issues have been brought to the agenda and new debates have been launched. Previously rejected values have begun to be absorbed by different segments of the society.

The distance between Western concepts such as democracy and secularism and their interpretation by Islamists has left its place to a search for such values in Islam

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[95] *Turkish Daily News* (Ankara daily), 23 July 2001.
[96] Nilüfer Göle, 'Engineers: 'Technocratic Democracy'' in *Turkey and the West: Changing Political and Cultural Identities*, Metin Heper et. al., eds. (New York: I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd., 1993), p. 217.

and to the struggle for proving the compatibility of Islam and democracy. Now, the effort was to erase the image that making references to Islam in politics does not always indicate obscurantism and favoring authoritarianism[97]. Elaboration on those concepts brought alternative definitions and explanations. Instead of rejecting the concept, many Islamist thinkers and intellectuals preferred criticizing the practices of democracy and secularism in Turkey[98]. For them what Islam brought nearly 1400 years ago, included democratic principles and practices. They were trying to show that democracy was not a gift of the Western civilization to humanity but rather it had roots in the Eastern cultures, especially in the Islamic tradition.

The shift in seeing democracy and secularism as compatible with Islam has been observed in different Islamist groups but in varied degrees. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan is among the ones who have changed their stands towards those values. My purpose here is not passing a judgement about their sincerity on this issue, but to elaborate on the degree of change in their discourse.

One of Erdoğan's statements that led to his sentence is 'my reference is Islam'. He explains what he means by saying that his reference to Islam is at personal level, and that politically speaking he takes the constitution and democratic principles as his references.[99] He tried to show that he was misunderstood. Both in saying 'my reference is Islam' and 'I am for *Shari'a*', he claims he is thinking in the line of a 'sincere Muslim'. He further elaborates on his usage of *Shari'a* in the place of rule

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[97] Mustafa Erdoğan, 'Siyasal Sistem ve Demokrasi', *Yeni Turkiye*, no. 17 (1997), p. 54.
[98] See Abdurrahman Dilipak, Ali Bulaç, Ahmet Taşgetiren, M. Esad Coşan.
[99] *Hürriyet*, 28 August 2001.

and law in general, God's rules in particular.[100] Metin Heper and Şule Toktaş argue that Erdoğan's metaphorical lexicon and the skepticism of the secular elites that are always in alarm explains why his statements are misinterpreted.[101]

Erdoğan is successful in deriving lessons from his past experiences. In his recent statements, he does not use terms that may be misunderstood. Rather than using rhetoric to incite people, he prefers talking as if he is a conciliatory figure. Another important evolution is on his conceptualization of secularism. The renovation here is not seeing secularism only as the 'assurance of democracy' or as a 'guarantor of the freedom of religion and conscience of members of varied religions', but that it is also the assurance of the freedom for the people without religious beliefs to organize their lives in the way they want.[102]

He was always against authoritarian leadership, someone becoming a subject of the leader. In an interview conducted in 1994, he emphasized the importance of 'being a slave to God not to man'.[103] He has criticized 'leadership based on monopolistic views',[104] which is an implicit critique of Erbakan's leadership. However, why he did not oppose or try to challenge Erbakan's authoritarianism until the late 1990s is hard to understand. Since he was one of the 'innovators' in the party, he favored democratic participation and pluralism[105] like the other architects of the late discourse of the RP. However, he also made very radical declarations. In a recently shown videocassette of 1995, he stated: 'You cannot be secular and Muslim

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[100] Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, *Bu Şarkı Burda Bitmez*, seventh printing, compiled by İbrahim Ethem Deveci (İstanbul: Nesil, 1999), p. 56.
[101] Metin Heper and Şule Toktaş, 'Islam, Modernity and Democracy In Contemporary Turkey', p. 12.
[102] Kalyon Hotel Press Conference, 23 August 2001. See the website of the AKP.
[103] *Nokta* (Istanbul weekly), 18-24 September 1994.
[104] Justice and Development Party, Foundation Ceremony, 14 August 2001. See the website of the AKP.
[105] M. Emin Gerger, *Belediyelerden Iktidara Refah* (İstanbul: Cemre, 1996), p. 27.

at the same time. The world's one and a half billion Muslims are waiting for the Turkish people to rise up. We will rise with Allah's permission; the rebellion will start.'[106] The word 'rebellion' was interpreted by many as *jihad* against the secular regime. However, Erdoğan claimed that 'rebellion will be resorted to for modernizing the Muslim world'.[107] In another radical speech in 1996 he said: 'They harp on the tune that secularism is about to be lost. If this nation wants that of course it will slip through their fingers. No one can prevent it.'[108] As it is understood from the above statements, which are reminiscent of those by Erbakan, Erdoğan took will of the people as significant.

The speeches he made in the period between 28 February 1997 and his imprisonment in 27 March 1999 referred to 'the low quality of Turkish democracy'.[109] He heavily criticized the politicization of judiciary that, he thought, would harm democracy.[110] During that period, he defined democracy as the superiority of the rule of law and freedom of speech.[111] The problematic point is his understanding of democracy as 'a means'. However, when he said that 'religions are also a means to achieve the happiness of mankind'[112] it becomes clear that he used means not in a pejorative sense.

It would not be wrong to say that Erdoğan is influenced by the Anglo-Saxon type liberal democracy and secularism. Not unlike Erbakan, he also praises the

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[106] *The Economist*, 22 September 2001.
[107] Douglas Frantz, 'Turkey on Road to Secularism, Fears Detour', *The New York Times*, 8 January 2002.
[108] *Turkish Daily News*, 5 July 2001.
[109] Look at Pamuk, *Yasaklı Umut*, pp. 102-103 and p. 118 for his speeches in 1998, after he was found guilty by the State Security Court (Devlet Güvenlik Mahkemesi) and in 1999, before he went to prison.
[110] Ibid., p. 103.
[111] Ibid., p. 118.
[112] Erdoğan, *Bu Şarkı Burda Bitmez*, p. 65.

practices in the USA and UK.[113] He does not define democracy as a means any longer, but as 'the perfect arrangement invented by humankind'.[114] He favors the concept of government that 'regulates, monitors, leads, and provides opportunities and incentives rather than one that imposes, resists, and distributes advantages'.[115] The above description is parallel to democracy in liberal democracies. Due to the rise of identity politics, Erdoğan also adopted a positive look towards pluralism. For him, yearning for unidimensional citizen would be harmful for such a country like Turkey, which suffers from democracy problems.[116]

Erdoğan says he has a respect for law, and he favors transparency. During his mayoralty, such views turned into actions: 'We will not close *Çiçek Pasajı* because we conform to the municipality law. We are obliged to act in line with these laws. (To the press) We will go and check together. If they do not violate the law then we would not close them.'[117] His conceptualization of democracy consists of collective reasoning, and consultation, that is, the large-scale exchange of ideas. Different opinions are considered as worth to be respected. In the municipality council even though they were in the majority, he suggested to be represented in the commissions according to the numerical weights of political parties.[118] His objection to discriminatory behavior becomes evident in providing economic assistance to the needy students without paying attention to whether they are Sunnis or Alevis.[119] The situation for non-Muslims is not different. Renovation of churches and synagogues

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[113] See his speech in the foundation ceremony of the AKP.
[114] Ibid.
[115] Turkish Grand National Assembly Group Speech of Erdogan, 13 August 13 2001. See the website of the AKP.
[116] Ibid.
[117] Pamuk, *Yasaklı Umut*, p. 61.
[118] Ibid, pp. 93-94
[119] Erdoğan, *Bu Şarkı Burda Bitmez*, pp. 43-44.

just like that of mosques was the policy of municipality during his mayoralty. He is an ardent supporter of internal democracy. After the establishment of the AKP, elections for the posts in the party were held. Erdoğan has not intervened in the elections, and some of his candidates could not be elected.

The abrupt change in the political language of Erdoğan in time seems to be linear. However, his change in approach worries some people in Turkey who fear the possibility of a reversion in his tune once if he came to power. To eliminate thosefears and worries, he explains his past mentality with reference to the particular circumstances of those days. By that way he aims to make people believe that in the past he behaved in accordance with the requirements of the situation. Furthermore, to be more credible, he admits that today when he looks at his past he notices his faults. In nearly all of his speeches, he points out that changing one's ways is a virtuous act. For him change is everywhere and inevitable. Under the guidance of the above changes, Erdoğan, whether he is a 'political Muslim', 'globalist conservative'[120] or as he defined himself, an 'observant Muslim'[121], he claims to have internalized the identity of a 'tolerant modernist for whom the faith in question means something much milder, far less exclusive, altogether less demanding and much more accommodating. Above all, it is a faith that is compatible with all other faiths'.[122]

Concerning the issue of women's participation in party politics, Erdoğan was the prominent figure in initiating and institutionalizing the ladies' commissions. After 1987, it became necessary to take women seriously in relation to politics. Erdoğan, who was at that time the leader of the RP's Istanbul organization, had the idea of

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[120] Ruşen Çakır, 'Erdoğan ile Gül O Kadar da Yakın Değil', *Milliyet*, 6 September 2000.
[121] *The Economist*, 22 September 2001.
[122] Ernest Gellner, *Postmodernism, Reason and Religion* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 3.

organizing women within the party branch. What he aimed at was reaching female electorate by the help of women. In the 1990 Work Schedule of the provincial organization the necessity to increase women participation to the activities of the party was emphasized.[123] Inevitably he faced fierce criticisms and harsh opposition from the conservative party ranks. They mostly defended the idea that the place of women is home, not the political parties.[124] The importance given to women in political matters has been novel for the supporters of 'national view'. It was really interesting to see women in the party organizations, which were under the direction of Erdoğan, despite the opposition.

Erdoğan thought his being elected mayor in the March 27 local elections as 'the victory of women'.[125] Although women began to be registered to the RP in 1983, their active enrollment and success gained significance in the eyes of party cadres starting only from the 1990s onwards. Erdoğan was the person who discovered the power of women in mobilizing other women. In 1995, there were 18,000 women active in the Istanbul organization.[126]

As noted, the commission that was set up first in the Istanbul organization of the RP for women was called the ladies' commission. It was affiliated to the public relations branch and was designed to organize monthly consultative meetings, seminars, panels and symposiums that dealt with fundamental problems of women, prepared propositions, and aimed at making itself institutionalized in the provincial

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[123] Yeşim Arat, *Political Islam in Turkey and Women's Organizations* (Istanbul: Tesev, 1999), p. 15.
[124] Ibid., p. 14.
[125] *Sabah* (Istanbul daily), 29 March 1994.
[126] Sibel Eraslan, 'Refahlı Kadın Tecrübesi', in *Osmanlı'dan Cumhuriyet'e Kadının Tarihi Dönüşümü*, Yıldız Ramazanoğlu , ed. (İstanbul: Pınar, 2000), p. 214.

and district levels.[127] After being successful in the 1994 local elections, the commission gained popularity; the party leaders could no longer stay indifferent to women's potential to reach more people.

In 1990, there was established another branch in the Provincial party organization in Istanbul, named *Kadın Divanı* (Women Council). It was to monitor what was going on in the party organization. Ongoing activities were reviewed. The meetings of the *Divan* were held once in a month with 280 participants from district organizations, in addition to those from the provincial organization. A system of internal discipline, information, and reporting, the system of data-pool (*veri-havuz sistemi*) organized from the bottom to the top and the political umbrella systems (*politik şemsiye sistemleri*) flowing from the top to the bottom through educational seminars and materials of propaganda strengthened the bonds between the ladies' commission and other administrative bodies where men were the majority.[128]

What Erdoğan initiated had important outcomes: Women were mobilized into politics, but the mobilization process was 'a process of apolitical politicization'.[129] They used the methods of social organizations and organized home chats, conferences, meetings, visits to hospitals, and picnics. The results were the recruitment of new members and the increase in the votes, which in turn were highly political. At first, women participated to party politics especially for God's sake on a

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[127] From the RP Istanbul İl Teşkilatı 1993 Yılı Çalışma Programı in Arat, *Political Islam in Turkey*, p. 16.
[128] Eraslan, 'Refahlı Kadın Tecrübesi', pp. 222-223.
[129] Arat, *Political Islam In Turkey*, p. 10.

voluntary basis. Later, it turned into professional party politics.[130] Women have begun to demand material rewards such as elective and appointive offices.

In the programs of both the MSP and RP there was no reference to women. In the latter, even the section about family did not include references to women. The newly established AKP takes a different stand about the issue of women. In its party program, under the heading of Social Policies there is a separate section for women. It says that the AKP gives primacy to the problems of women that had been ignored for many years.[131] It is worth to point out that among those things the party being opposes, the sexual discrimination is particularly underlined.

Erdoğan and the Military

The military has always been an important institution in Turkish history. As the most educated and disciplined body, except the period of Janissaries' revolt against the reform movements in the eighteenth century Ottoman Empire it has always been an ardent supporter of modernization. After the establishment of the Turkish Republic it has undertaken another mission, that of being the guardian of the Atatürkist principles -- republicanism, secularism, nationalism, populism, statism, and revolutionism. Although the military in Turkey intervened in politics three times it is clear that the generals are not against democracy and 'their idealism was moderated by a civilian ethic', that is leaving the last word to the civilian leaders.[132] The issues that they are particularly sensitive to are secularism and national unity. Any action

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[130] Eraslan, 'Refahlı Kadın Tecrübesi', p. 233.
[131] www.akparti.com.tr/program.
[132] Metin Heper and Aylin Güney, 'The Military and Democracy in the Third Turkish Republic', *Armed Forces and Society*, vol. 22 (Summer 1996), p. 637.

against them is recognized as an attempt to overthrow the regime. Hence, it is inevitable to see a tension between the military and the Islamic groups that became an important part of the political and social life from the 1990s onwards. The words, actions, and policies of the RP politicians during the RP-DYP coalition government disturbed the generals so much that they thought that the continuation of the coalition government would be dangerous for the secular order in Turkey. The confrontation between the two did not end up in a military coup, but in the resignation of Erbakan and later the removal of the RP from the political scene with the decision of the Constitutional Court.

However, for the generals the threat coming from Islamists is not totally neutralized. The successors of the 'national view' parties are still in the political arena under different names. Their claims that they have changed cannot convince secular elites. The previous radical discourse of the Islamic oriented politicians creates suspicious look to their recent speeches. For instance, Erdoğan is not seen sincere in his new discourse due to his past words and deeds. The content of the notorious poem, his insistence on the building of a mosque in Taksim, his opening the first meeting of the municipality council of Istanbul with a *Fatiha* (the first verse of the Qur'an), and his banning alcohol in the municipality-run restaurants are not forgettable for the secular elite. Thus, Erdoğan's struggle to show the change in his thoughts seems to be a waste of time.

Erdoğan asserts that there is no need to be afraid of them, to feel threatened especially on the issues of Atatürk's legacy, secular republic, and democracy since

the AKP is not an Islamic oriented party.[133] When his words in a meeting in Afyon were interrupted with the slogan 'This is the army, this is the commander' (famous slogan of the RP), Erdoğan said: 'The AKP has no slogan like that and we have one army whose commanders are known by everybody. We are a political party; we are part of a civil movement. Thus, beware of making such mistakes.'[134]

The first tension with generals came after 1980 coup. Erdoğan at that time was a football player in a public transport team. The boss was a retired colonel and wanted Erdoğan to shave off his beard. Erdoğan refused and, instead, gave up his professional football career.

After the last cassette that Erdoğan's speech in Rize had been recorded was found, Erdoğan was again in trouble with the generals. His words 'intihar celladı' (to denote death of young boys in the military's attempts to repress the PKK in the southeast region of Turkey) distressed them,[135] but Erdoğan claims that his target was not the army but the government of those days that decided to send soldiers to the region. He stresses that he has problems neither with the Turkish Armed Forces (Türk Silahlı Kuvvetleri-TSK) nor with the Republic.[136] 'TSK is the most important institution for me. No one should try to make military and the AKP turn into enemies of each other', Erdoğan said.[137] However, it is doubtful that he would erase the negative image easily especially when new problematic cassettes continue to be discovered.

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[133] *Sabah*, November 6, 2001.
[134] *Ibid.*
[135] *Hürriyet*, April 27, 2002.
[136] Ibid.
[137] *Hürriyet*, April 30, 2002.

Chapter Four

CONCLUSION

Turkey has been in a process of rapid transformation from the 1980s onward. The changes have not only been seen in the economic structure but nearly in every sphere. Many Western values and concepts have begun to be adopted by large portions of the society and gradually have become a part of the political culture. The role and function of Islam have also been in transformation, but for several more decades, going back to even the Ottoman times.

The first remarkable change occurred with the establishment of the Turkish Republic in 1923. Although the new republic was the successor of the Ottoman Empire, the founders of the Turkish Republic were resolved to eradicate all the elements of the *ancien* regime. Since religion was one of them, it was inevitable for the architects of the republic to try to make a change in the role and function of Islam, which had been embedded in the Ottoman social and political life. The aim of the founders of the republic was to become integrated with the West and be a part of that civilization. Religion would have been an obstacle to their modernization project.

The project had a soporific effect on the Islamic consciousness. Things started to change with the emergence of increasing opposition to the one-party rule of the Republican People's Party. After the 1950s, following the transition to multi-party politics, the demands the frozen-out Islamists began to gain momentum. They established many political parties-the National Resurgence Party, the Social Justice Party, and the Nation Party were the leading ones. Even though they failed to become more than *tabela partisi* ('political parties on paper'--to denote the triviality of the parties in question), those were the first serious attempts to carry their demands to the political arena.

The 1970s were the years that the first serious Islamic-oriented political parties were set up. The National Order Party and the National Salvation Party played crucial roles in integrating the religious political tendencies to the system. By that way, they functioned as socializing political agents, incorporating Islamist groups to the fold of politics seen as legitimate by the establishment. The two parties in question were also claimed to have had a secularizing effect on their supporters by rendering the *political* authority of the party superior over the *religious* authority of the *dergah*.[138] Although Islamists harshly criticized modernity because it was a product of the West, Islamist movements were nothing but a byproduct of modernity, not unlike many other political and social movements. What Islamists tried to do was that of redefining Islamic identity and repositioning it in the discourse of modernity in order to find a place for themselves. Islam entered into a search for legitimacy by reproducing itself within the boundaries of modernity.

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[138] Ruşen Çakır and Fehmi Çalmuk, *Recep Tayyip Erdoğan: Bir Dönüşüm Öyküsü* (İstanbul: Metis, 2001), p. 172.

Another period that Islamist movement gained impetus was the 1980s. During the Özal era of 1983-1991, some of the Islamists transformed their identities and developed a new identity referred to as 'conservative bourgeoisie.' The establishment accepted that group. Conversely, as the ones in the group participated in political, economic, and social activities the state became more legitimate in their eyes. Moderation in that sense was said to be the outcome of the successful inclusion.

The 1990s became successful years for Islamists and especially for the 'national view' sympathizers. The change and the success in question could be explained by such factors as the conjectural changes, the emergence of new discourses, and a new style of politics, more than the personal triumph of Erbakan in particular and Islam in general.

The Islamic-oriented Welfare Party first captured the mayoralties in many cities and towns, including the biggest two cities, Istanbul and Ankara in the 1994 local elections, and then obtained the largest number of votes in the 1995 national elections. On the other hand, once in power the Welfare Party realized that nothing was the same as it was seen from the opposition seats. That was an opportunity to become more moderate; however, they missed the chance. Erbakan overlooked the pro-*Shari'a* slogans and anti-regime protests by the rank-and-file in the party. The fate of the party was not different from its predecessors-the National Order Party and the National Salvation Party. Several anti-system statements Erbakan made and his remaining silent when other members of the party made such statements brought the closure of the Welfare Party in 1998.

It was not therefore surprising that Islamists that tried to be included in the system without changing themselves in a substantial manner, faced refusal at some points. The February 28 recommendations of the National Security Council gave the message that unless they gave up their radical tendencies, they could not be a part of the system fully. Many of the Islamists chose to be modernist rather than to be deviant. The recalcitrant groups were marginalized and rendered largely ineffective.

It has been pointed out that 'democracy involves a process of trial and error, a joint learning experience.'[139] It has also been indicated that 'through a painful experience and impasse those who hope to win everything understood that the possibility of winning something is better than winning nothing.[140] The Turkish experience noted here supports these views.

In this essay what I am interested is investigating the differences and similarities between Erbakan and Erdoğan concerning their views on Islam-democracy relationship in Turkey. They are different in many respects despite coming from the same tradition. In the past, they represented an identical political line. Gradually, Erdoğan has drifted away from the old discourse. The main point that differentiates Erdoğan from Erbakan is the fact that the former have realized the necessity of making changes in his political stance. Moreover, Erdoğan has repeatedly pointed out that he has changed. He has been trying to give the impression that his present views are substantially different from the ones he held when he entered politics. In contrast, Erbakan has not claimed that he has modified his views.

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[139] Dankwart A. Rustow, 'Transitions to Democracy: Toward a Dynamic Model,' in Lisa Anderson, ed. *Transition to Democracy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), p. 32.
[140] John Waterbury, 'Democracy Without Democrats: The Potential for Political Liberalization in the Middle East' in Ghassan Salam, ed. *Democracy Without Democrats? The Renewal of Politics in the Muslim World* (London: Tauris, 1994), p. 35.

From time to time his praxis did not fit his views. On such occasions, he pretended to be influenced by the necessities of the day. While Erdoğan seems to have adopted a novel style of politics, on the whole Erbakan remained stuck to his old discourse.

One may even argue that in contrast to Erdoğan Erbakan contributed to the development of tensions in Turkish politics. After taking over the authority in the party starting from the first half of the 1970s, Erbakan brought the 'national view' movement to a different point than what the *dergah* had planned. The aim of the *dergah* was that of setting up a political party sensitive to Islamic values, working for the moral development of the overall society in Turkey and representing the demands of the Islamist portion of the population. The *dergah* was not interested setting up a state based on Islam. Erbakan as leader made the language of the party bitter and radicalized the tendencies of party members. He based his political discourse on the argument that the system had severe deficiencies and he used that tactic to attract more people to his movement. He formulated an abstract terminology –moral order (*ahlak nizamı*), once again great Turkey (*yeniden büyük Türkiye*), heavy industry (*ağır sanayi*), and just order (*adil düzen*)- in order to keep high the fervor of the masses.

Consequently, one after another Islamist groups withdrew the support from Erbakan. A moderate wing of *Nakşibendi* tied to *İskenderpaşa* seminary began to support the Motherland Party that was also established by the active support of the *dergah*. Some branches of the *Nurcus* were also frustrated by Erbakan's attitude and looked for an alternative political party. The group of Necip Fazıl (*Büyük Doğu*) chose collaborating with the Nationalist Action Party.

By eliminating these groups, Erbakan successfully formed a tight-knit group that remained loyal to him. Inside the party there were left minor opposing voices, which failed to challenge the rule of Erbakan. The result was that in the eyes of his supporters Erbakan became a cult. Considering Erbakan's views as absolute and complete truths brought *immobilisme* to their movement. The movement began to be named as *Erbakancılık* (Erbakanism), and the followers as *Erbakancı* (Erbakanist). The failure of Erbakan was that he did nothing to prevent the 'national view' movement creating a closed ideology. On the contrary, Erbakan enjoyed being the sole spokesperson of the movement.

The movement of the so-called 'innovators' gains importance at this point since they have claimed that their movement is an attempt to escape from the vicious circle that developed the close ideology in question. It is possible to argue that the success of Erdoğan is dependent on his not being trapped by a similar monolithic, absolutist thinking.

When the issue is their views on Islam-democracy relationship and secularism then too Erbakan and Erdoğan have many differences. The one that has given importance to Islam-democracy relationship is the latter. For Erdoğan, those who claim that Islam is not compatible with democracy are either radical Islamists or radical secularists in Turkey. Erbakan has never made public his real ideas on democracy, secularism, and the relationship between Islam and democracy. It is inferred from his criticism of the praxis of secularism in Turkey that for him, secularism is the guarantor of freedom of conscience. Erbakan seems to have given primary importance to the will of believers and thus to the freedoms of believers.

Erdoğan, according to his current discourse, praises not only the will of believers but also the will of the people as a whole and their freedoms. He argues that he has an inclusive understanding of secularism. He defends the idea that the state becomes secular when it is impartial and unbiased to all religions, belief systems, and philosophical opinions.

The most important similarity between the two politicians is their using a similar political jargon in the past. Both Erbakan and Erdoğan resorted to radical rhetoric in their speeches. Later, Erdoğan acknowledged that change is inevitable and it is time to give up polemical and bitter language. Rather than rejecting his past speeches, he accepts that with their rights and wrongs they belong to him. By that way, he has given the image that he is trying to derive lessons from the past. Thus, his discourse seems to have gone through a consistent change. Erbakan, on the contrary, does not seem to have taken lessons from the past. 'Changes' in his lexicon have always been according to the audience he addresses. Hence there existed no real change, let alone a consistent one. Erbakan has always given the image that in a sense his views were 'erratic'.

It is a reality that Islamist groups have become diversified and more heterogeneous in recent decades. As the comparison of Erbakan and Erdoğan indicates, some have gone through a change; some have hardly changed. Some have begun to absorb universal values and internalize what global changes bring. Others have failed in transforming themselves according to the necessities of contemporary world. Hence, the latter have lagged behind the political conjuncture.

According to the secular elites, Islam would have clashed with modernity since the former was perceived as an impediment in the path of the latter. Ironically, Islamic currents flourished with modernity. Today, in Turkey, it is a fact that even the political structures that continue to practice religion-based politics have a tendency of reconciling religion and modernity.

In a country like Turkey where there is a volatile political environment, change is inevitable. Transformation of Islamism creates change in the parameters of the Turkish political system. Secular elites that think that the change is not sincere but 'cosmetic,' and is part of a tactic frustrate the efforts of the Islamists to get integrated into the system. The former accuse the latter of concealing their real intentions. Whether the change is real or fake is beyond the aim of this essay.

What is significant for the present purpose is the fact that there have been changes in varying degrees in the discourses of different Islamist groups. It is obvious that on the part of the bulk of the Islamists there developed a consensus on the compatibility of Islam and democracy. It is possible to argue that in Turkey political Islam is not on the cards. Radical and fundamentalist rhetoric has increasingly become marginalized. It seems that the traditional Islamist line will not continue in the future. Rather, a new tendency that welcomes democracy and human rights will flourish. Islamism that closes itself to change will not be accepted and supported by large masses in Turkey. In recent decades, almost everybody began to embrace democracy, which shows that Turkey is successfully following the route towards a consolidated democracy.

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