

MODERATION OF ASSERTIVE SECULARISM: TURKISH MUSLIMS IN POLITICS

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ABSTRACT

This paper entails that assertive secularism—the basis of communitarian ideology in Turkey—creates a dilemma of democratization. The policies regulating Muslim identity hinder democracy while blocking movements that might reverse democratization. For higher level of democracy, the religious market should be liberalized. This has been partially achieved due to the increasing cost of suppressing religion. Since early 1980s, various changes softened assertive secularism. The emergence of new conditions affecting the regulation of religious identity is discussed. It is concluded that public sphere should be isolated from any sort of explicit positive endorsement of any doctrine—including secularism—for democratization.

Keywords: Assertive Secularism, Islam, Turkey, Democratization, Religious Market, Laicism.

ZORLAYICI SEKÜLARİZMİN İLİMLİLİŞMESİ: TÜRKİYE SİYASETİNDE MÜSLÜMANLAR

ÖZ

Bu çalışmada Türkiye'deki toplumcu ideolojinin temelini de oluşturan zorlayıcı sekülarizmin neden olduğu demokratikleşme ikileminden bahsedilmektedir. Müslüman kimliği düzenleyen politikalar bir yandan demokrasiye zarar verirken bir yandan da demokratikleşme sürecini geri çevirebilecek hareketleri engellemiştir. Daha katılımcı bir demokrasi seviyesi için 'din kimliği alanı' daha da özgür bırakılmalıdır. Bu, dini sembol ve kimliklerin kamusal alandaki görünürlüğünün engellenmesinin elit çevre için masrafının artmasından ötürü kısmen de olsa gerçekleşmiştir. 1980lerin başından itibaren gerçekleşen değişiklikler zorlayıcı sekülarizmin yumuşamasına neden olmuştur. Sonuç olarak, daha ileri bir demokrasi seviyesi için kamusal alanın—laiklik de dahil olmak üzere—herhangi bir doktrinin pozitif vurgusundan korunması gerekmektedir görüşü vurgulanmaktadır.

Anahtar Kavramlar: Zorlayıcı sekülarizm, İslam, Türkiye, Demokratikleşme, Laiklik.

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Makalenin kabul tarihi: Temmuz 2018.

INTRODUCTION

Turkey is a country built upon a perceptibly strict ideology that essentially grants a firm regulation of religious identity in politics. Assertive secularism has been so visible in diverse layers of politics, culture, or even daily life that the idea of ‘Turkish exceptionalism’—having a predominantly Muslim population and diverging from the rest of similar the countries—has evolved into a common sense among generations of politicians, academics, and citizens. This common sense has been legitimized on the account of its bestowal of a democratic or democratizing state for a predominantly Muslim society. The principals of restrictive treatment of religion, especially in the public sphere, are pledged and their legitimacy has pertained in the nation, at least within the segment of the society inheriting the duty of guarding the founding ideology. Still, for some, Turkish secularism remained to be discerned as a highly restraining paradox due its incompatibility with human rights or even the intended (liberal) democracy.

The posture of contemplating religion as inapt within the ‘modern’ democratic regime has been one of the prevailing and central premises the Kemalist secularism was built upon. The ongoing suspicion about the predominantly Muslim population, Islamic culture, and any political entrepreneur that might take advantage of these gave path to the idea that had the modern state become a democracy, it should control religious—especially Muslim—identity. Keeping religion in the private sphere, and controlling how religion is practiced became prerequisites for democratic consolidation. Secular state-ideology designed for democracy, on the one hand, has taught the groups having the potential of reversing the democratization endeavour that democracy is ‘the only game in town’. On the other hand, it hindered the process of democratization in certain aspects.

Since early 2000s, religious characteristics such as the ones Justice and Development Party (JDP) programme includes have been partially recognized as competently taking part in Turkish politics. For example, the party programme concludes as ‘*May Allah be the beloved and assistant of our nation.*’ However, the situation has not been always similar. The process Turkish laicism has undergone is revealing in understanding the moderation of agents within religious regulation in democracies.

This paper, first, clarifies a parsimonious understanding of democracy and elucidates Turkish laicism with a focus on how treatment of religion—for the sake of democracy—might contradict the basics of the modern regime coveted. Then, with a focus on democratization and control of religious identity, the structural history in Turkey is summarized for an analysis under the light of Gill’s (2008) theory of religious liberty, as religious freedom in the public sphere is regarded to be a necessary condition for higher level of democratization. It is maintained that the increasing appearance of religious identity in politics is a

contribution to Turkish democracy and this is due to the changing factors that put constraints on the main agents of assertive secularism that had preferred to control politics or public sphere via means such as party closure or coup d'état. The analysis of the history is informative in the sense that it does not only highlight some new costs or calculations the regulative elite had to consider. It also signifies the role of other actors—mostly religious groups—in changing the preferences in the democratization process. Finally, the article concludes with a brief discussion of Gill's theory to argue that the most recent changes in the country might be analysed further for investigating possible trajectories of Turkish politics or democratization.

I. MODERN TURKISH DEMOCRACY AND RELIGIOUS IDENTITY

In Turkey, democracy or democratization has been habitually treated as the lack or prevention of religious law or power over the regime, and the religious identity strictly locked-out of politics. The role of religion, and the interaction between the 'modern' and 'traditional Islamist' worldviews have been among the persistent key themes of Turkish democratization/modernization. The process of struggle for democracy has been simply 'the building of a secular state apparatus; the replacement of 'religion' by 'nation' as the basis of legitimacy of the sovereignty of the new state; the deportation of Islam from the state to society; and re-birth of Islam in the hands of the social actors as a political ideology aiming at re-capturing the state it had lost' (Yılmaz, 2007: 477).

Democracy has been a contested concept in politics, and politicians do not hesitate to paraphrase its meaning in accordance with their convictions (Schmitter, Karl, 1991: 75). In this sense, Turkish politics is not an exception. Although in politics what democracy denotes is contextual, in scholarly works the frequent method of classifying democracy is contrasting it with other types of regimes and underlining the distinctiveness. This has not defined democracy as a transparent concept that means the same for all. One of the pioneers in democracy studies, Dahl (1971), 'tried to introduce a new term, 'polyarchy,' in the (vain) hope of gaining a greater measure of conceptual precision' of democracy (Schmitter, Karl, 1991: 75). The conditions for a 'true' democracy that Dahl (1971) introduced have been accepted as essentials by most of the scholars. Dahl's idea of 'free and contested elections' has been extensively regarded as what every democracy, at least, require (Stepan, 2000: 38). For Dahl (1971), for free and contested elections a state should have the following institutions or principles: liberty to shape and to join associations or organizations; free will of expression; the right to vote; eligibility for public office; the right of contending for vote and support; the presence of multi-channels of information; free and fair elections; and mechanism binding governments preferences to the will of the people.

Beside Dahl's free and contested elections, Linz and Stepan (1997) add the necessity of a constitution for a country to suffice to be a democracy. They (1997) designate that democracy should have an establishment or a constitution that values primary liberties and provide substantial security for minority rights. Further, Stepan (2000: 39) indicates that 'democracy is a system of conflict regulation that allows open competition over the values and goals that citizens want to advance.' A country can generate institutions necessary for free and contested elections. Nevertheless, other principles a state build can engender constraints on contestation. The restriction might be legitimized due to the characteristics of the country. Exclusion of certain groups or identities in elections or public service can be operationalized for their historical illegitimacy. In such settings, free elections are for some rather than for the all. The guarantee of individual liberties is supplied if and only if the individual stays within the boundaries of the identity the state defines. Therefore, an establishment sustained according to any custom, institution, or strategy promoting certain identities at the expense of the ones that are not aligned with the preferred ideological setting creates setbacks for democratization.

Reflecting on the minimum requirements of a country to be categorized as democracy, Turkey, which is a predominantly Muslim country, needs further in its strict regulation of religious identity in politics. In Turkey, some individual liberties in politics are diffidently confined according to the state ideology. The type of secularism effective in the country, around which the founding ideology and principles of governance converge, has partially been a dilemma of democratization.

Turkey succeeded the Ottoman rule over a predominantly Muslim population in Anatolia in 1920s. The founders of the country and their monopolistic rule for the early decades designed an endeavour for developing the society to the level of the 'modern world.' In this project, religious identities or signifiers, especially in public or political sphere, was indicated as an obstacle to be overcome with a strict version of secularism or laicism. Accordingly, the elite defined proper version of Islam. Enforcement of secularism instead of democracy was introduced or alleged as the main concern. In general, the project of modernization and its measures of secularization were in tension with Islam, because the state aimed to privatize religion while it tended to refine what it was and where it belonged to (Arat, 2005: 3).

In the early decades, policies were implemented for institutional and legal restructuring of the society and to re-define the role of religion. The caliphate was brought to an end and The General Directorate of Religious Affairs and the General Directorate of Pious Foundations was established. The state or the Kemalist elite adopted 'assertive secularism' (Kuru, 2007) or have practiced 'secularism as an ideology' (Hadden, 1987; Casanova 2009). An official Islam and the true way of 'believing' was introduced via state

apparatuses. The Turkish Republic introduced ‘hostile separation’ (Casanova, 2009) of religion from the state within which tolerance for religious freedom was essentially undermined. Secularism in its initiation was attached to state authority and the Kemalist elite insisted on a subordination of religion to state authority (Arat, 2005; Fuller, 2008).

Early leaders aspired to ‘design’ a new nation-state founded explicitly on Turkish ethnic nationalism and a new set of nationalist values instead of multi-ethnic, multi-religious, and Islam-oriented values of the Ottoman Empire (Fuller, 2008: 25). It was a homogenization project that was supposed to direct individuals toward a ‘true’ citizen or identity. The standardization project included a fit-for-all type of religion. Official religion or an accurate way of practice was promoted by overpowering the different at the expense of the diversity. Projects of modernization, especially secularization of the state, created a long history of differentiating, marginalizing, and excluding large sectors of the society (Yavuz, Esposito, 2003: xiv) by granting a certain ‘model individual-citizen.’

Secularism in Turkey is different from the ones effective in other countries such as the United States—passive secularism—because in Turkey it involves an attempt to control ‘life-world’ of and impose a way of life on the people (Habermas, 1984: 39, 287; Kuru, 2007). Turkish secularism is based on the radical Jacobin laicism that strived transforming society through the power of the state and eliminating religion from the public sphere (Berkes, 1998). In the context of Turkey ‘the laik identity consists of progressive, modern, and nationalist’ while ‘laicism [is] the identity of the ruling elite, the ideology of the national-security state with a built-in code of violence to exclude anyone who does not fit the state’s definition of laik Turk’ (Yavuz, Esposito, 2003: xxiii).

Considering the institutionalization of the exclusionary state ideology and democracy, the paradox of democracy becomes more apparent. Even though civil liberties, free and fair elections are guaranteed by the constitution, outcomes of the elections and political parties in practice should be in line with secular ideology. The political and public had been for not all but for the ‘proper.’

Hakyemez and Akgun (2002: 55) precisely explain the evolution of the constitution of Turkey and how it included authoritarian ingredients in the rule. It can be argued that the political tradition in Turkey has been one that prioritized state or its founding ideology at the expense of various liberties of the citizens. Since the early periods of the country, constitutional amendments have not always designated enhancement of civil liberties (Pollis, 1989: 255). In particular, the 1982 Constitution was introduced to protect the state against the individuals and groups, and thus characterized by repression and reflected the deep distrust of the army towards civilian politicians (Hakyemez, Akgun, 2002: 56). Its articles on basic human rights in general and on individual freedoms in

particular were much more restrictive than those in previous Turkish constitutions (Özbudun, 1988: 198). For example, article 13 of 1982 Constitution stated that fundamental rights and freedoms may be restricted by law especially for ‘safeguarding the indivisible integrity of the State with its territory and nation, national sovereignty, The Republic, national security and public order.’ Such an article might not be unique to the case of Turkey and might be considered as ordinary in an understanding of politics granting the integrity of the state. However, examples of prioritizing Turkish state over the individual freedom can be easily extended.

Democracy in Turkey did not mean equality among ideas or identities. It was not a system of contestation for all identities in the society. The idea of democracy as a conflict resolution among parties locked out religious identities. Negotiations or interest seeking via democratic means such as formation of a political party representing a religious segment of the society was clearly banned by the constitution that perpetuates the idea of homogenous society within which each individual should be a Turk, nationalist, and non-religious in their relations with others in the public sphere—especially in politics.

In the section of the 1982 Constitution in which freedom of political activity and organization were regulated, political parties were described as indispensable elements of democratic political life (Hakyemez, Akgun, 2002: 58). Although, in principle political parties are authorized to act freely, the Constitution also put important limitations on their activities (Akgun, 2001: 71). In addition to the Constitution, Political Parties Act (PPA) also added to the paradox of democracy. It directly restricted the rights of contestation of religiously oriented groups in seeking their interests. The prohibitions imposed on the party activities were more comprehensive than the constitutional provisions and seemed to be unconstitutional (Akgun, 2001: 178). For example, article 81 of the PPA prohibited the formation of minority parties on the basis of regionalism, race, or religious denomination and Article 89 of the PPA stipulated that political parties were not permitted to organize religious ceremonies or advocate the elimination of the head of religious affairs from the structure of the general administration (60). These clearly indicate a tradition of strict control of religious identity in Turkish politics.

The idea of laicism or assertive secularism forming one of the basics of the state ideology and restricting the religious presence in politics resulted in the marginalization of different identities in Turkey (Arat, 2005: 5). The secular elite and the Muslim others have been perceived as distinctive two opposing groups. Due to the historical legacy or the ‘critical juncture’ (Kuru, 2007) in the country, the power has been in the advantage of the former group. As a result of the power alignment during the formation years of the country, assertive secularism and its agents have dominated the politics in Turkey.

Heper (1985) indicates that the Turkish state as a regime where the rulers or the elite decide the supreme interest of the public and exercise power for people, at times despite the people, because of the legitimacy its communitarian and secular ideology had. In pursuit of their mission for a modern alteration of the society, the elite undervalued the preferences, culture, and beliefs of the people (Arat, 2005: 6). What the elite undervalued was especially the traditional and the religious.

If Turkey seeks a higher level of democracy, the constraints on the freedom of participation of different identities in politics should be less restrictive. In other words, the regulative power of state or elite ideology over identities in politics should evolve according to the needs of contemporary politics. Nevertheless, it is not an easy mission in a country where control of religious identity is taken among the ultimate good due to the belief that modernity is only possible with minimal role of religion and there is vivid experience of threats towards democracy from certain religious groups. The possibility of the mission, firstly, depends on the preferences of the secular elite. They can either struggle to maintain power and ability to maintain assertive secularism or choose to loosen up certain norms for creating space for religious identity in politics. Secondly, it depends on the individuals prioritizing religious or Muslim identity. The willingness of this second set of actors in assuring the secular elite that they regard democracy as the only game in town plays a significant role in solving the paradox of democracy. This implies that liberty of religious identity in politics and public sphere, which can be accounted as a condition for democratization, depends on the willingness, preferences, and capability of the actors. In other words, it is simply a matter of power that comes with its cost-benefit analysis.

Gill's (2008) theory of religious liberty is highly relevant to the underlying reasons of the appearance of Muslim identity in Turkey. Besides the empirical and logical support, focus of the theory on agency and preferences of the political actors in the fate of freedom of religious identities in public sphere implies the appropriateness of Gill's approach in analysing the ignition of religious presence in Turkish politics. Although, the theory explicitly designates the deductive approach on analysing 'religious economies' that are stages for struggle of proselytizing under rules or laws of the state (Gill, 2008: 8 [See Footnote 10]), the theory has immense relevance to the case of Turkish secularism and Muslim identity in politics.

Thinking religious freedom as a matter of government regulation (2008: 10) yet not merely the conscious choice of individuals, the author argues that the interests of parties (the regulator and the regulated) are the main determinants of the nature of religious liberty (8). Gill (2005; 2008: 31-40) clearly demonstrates the weaknesses of theories of modernization and secularism (latter of which is a type of strict religious regulation (2008: 18) and builds the axioms and

propositions (2008: 41-59; 2005) of his theory. In Gill's theory, what is most strikingly relevant to the focal point of this paper is the types of high level of religious regulation and the determinants of the behaviour of the key actors who define the terms of a regulatory system.

Gill (2005; 2008: 9) argues, '[p]oliticians take into account their own political survival, the need to raise government revenue, and the ability to grow the economy when writing laws pertaining religious freedom' and '[w]henver a rather restrictive set of laws governing religious activity affect any of these three interests, secular rulers will be more opt to liberalize regulation on religion.' There are two ways politicians or government authorities can regulate or restrict religion: 'Negative restrictions of religious liberty' and 'positive endorsements of specific denominations' (2008: 12-21). 'The former category is relatively self-explanatory and includes specific regulations telling (...) certain groups that they cannot undertake certain activities' while '[p]ositive endorsements of select denominations have a more subtle effect when it comes to restricting religious liberty' that '[f]avouritism shown to one faith tradition" can turn the conditions restrictive for the adherents of other doctrines (2008: 12). Therefore, whenever their interests are served, politicians prefer these types of regulations in order to direct the society or the "religious marketplace' (42) towards conditions of their preferences.

Assertive secularism in Turkey is related to both negative restrictions and positive endorsements and the political actors play the key roles in determining the conditions for religious freedom in politics. Turkish secularism has served the interests of the elite denying certain rights to religious groups and Muslim identity in the public sphere. Moreover, secularism as a positive endorsement of a religious-like doctrine (Monsma, Soper, 1997 [Cited in Gill, 2008: 18]) created less space for other doctrines in public sphere. In cases such as Turkey where '[p]olitical leaders see the dominant [religion] as a potential threat to their political survival and seek to limit its societal influence' (Gill 2008: 9), a 'highly regulated (less free) religious environment that does not favour the dominant [religion] or *most* other denominations' (9 [Emphasis added]) is observed. The theory predicts that as far as secularism serves the interests of the political elite in Turkey, the assertive type is maintained. However, if secularism creates obstacles in generating government revenue, achieving economic growth, or political survival of 'the regulators,' then Turkish religious marketplace—dominated by positive endorsement of secular doctrine—becomes relatively liberated. The obstacles or costs of achieving the main three interests of the political actors can be various and case-specific. Gill clearly indicates that his theory is a general framework guiding case studies in which researcher can 'preserve the uniqueness of the case' (2005: 21).

The historical narrative discussed in the following section explicates the process starting from early tensions between the secular elite and their

counterparts in regulation of religious identity in public sphere. With a focus on recent changes in the country that are thought to be apparent with the electoral victories of the JDP and chronological responses from the secular elite—especially military—it is shown that recent presence of Muslim identity in politics is due to the steadily increasing cost of maintaining the past strict directive of religion. The narrative excels at clarifying possible explanatory factors for increasing cost for the secular elite. It also indicates the importance of elite preference and power alignment in the country in determining the fate of religious freedom and the crucial role of institutions in teaching the marginal groups the rules of democracy and their moderation. Although the most recent changes or developments in the country might indicate different routes for the policies or preferences the key actors can take, the general analysis of the article is still relevant and might be an accurate framework to understand the recent politics.

II. MUSLIMS IN SECULAR POLITICS

In this section, modern Turkish history is summarized with an interest in the tension between identities in politics. In the analysis, actors are regarded as the key agents since the state started as an elite project and the power dominance of a certain group—or ideology—has been the key determinant of the political process and regulation of religion (For a detailed discussion see (Kuru, 2007)). Moreover, as discussed in the previous section, religious freedom, hence progress of democracy, depends on the perception and preferences of the elite.

The establishment of the republic and the institutionalization of the secular norms form the first period. The focal point of the earlier sections that the project of the suppression of any ideology other than secular modernization is significant in this era. However, the following period—starting with the multiparty elections—is more critical for the current study since interaction between key actors started to take its shape as a struggle within the political sphere.

The democratization of the regime within which considerations over different values or interests can be peacefully negotiated started to take its shape in 1950 with the introduction of multi-party election (Arat, 2005; Fuller; 2008). Various political groups and parties emerged challenging the monopoly of the single ruling party. However, most of them were declared as illegitimate and banned from contestation. Democrat Party (DP) established in 1946 was an exception to the decision of the Kemalist elite—especially the military—and it was successful in 1950 election. In the first experience of the presence of an opposition party in elections, one of the contentious topics that DP did not hesitate to emphasize was the necessity of relaxation of state control over religion (Arat, 2005: 4). The DP pledged democracy and indicated it as a regime that would permit more space for religious identity in public space (4). One of the first initiatives DP undertook after coming to power in 1950 was authorizing

the prayer to be in Arabic rather than Turkish. Moreover, the first religious schools of the modern state—Prayer and Leader Preacher Schools—were opened under their government. Although DP was not evidently Islamist, they utilized the demands of the Muslim population asking for more room in religion in the public sphere. The experience of DP and attempts of enlarging the space for religion ended with the 1960 military intervention.

As the country developed and demands for further democratization, hence more religious freedom, became apparent, the first party using Islamist rhetoric, National Order Party (NOP), was founded in 1970. However, it was closed by a constitutional court order and this was followed by 1971 coup d'état. The army claimed that the party exploited religion and threatened secularism, hence violated the constitution (Arat, 2005). The closed party was soon to be followed by its replacement, the National Salvation Party (NSP) (Türsan, 2004). Soon, the NSP became a critic of modernization, especially Westernization, which was alleged as repressing and denying the role of religion in people's life (Arat, 2005: 5).

The military intervened in 1980 to stop the disintegration of the state and dissolved several parties including the ones adopting Islamist rhetoric. However, the 1980 coup d'état is the last example of the direct interventions of the secular elite in politics for the sake of democracy, unity of the state, and secularism. Until 1980s the elite assigning the military the right of intervention in domestic politics for the sake of sacred elements of the ideology had the ability and conditions favouring their intervention. However, the structure of Turkish politics yet transformed and became a stage of changing reactions.

In the aftermath of direct military interventions, 'the multiparty system in Turkey created new political space for Islamic movements to work closely with political parties' (Lubeck, 2001). Several Islamic and civil organizations emerged. In addition, the Cold War and the communist movement in Turkey forced the state to use Islamic movements as a solution for the leftist groups (2001). These two factors: 'Deepening of electoral democracy' and 'the repression of democratic leftist forces' (2001: 4), created political opportunities for movements who prioritized their Muslim identity. Thus, the 1980 military coup coincided with disruption of existing power arrangements and emergence of opportunities for new factors who desired to restructure the power relations and the distribution of the resources (Yavuz, Esposito, 2003).

In 1980, when Turkish generals intervened to stop escalating left-right violence and to restrain a growing leftist movement, they utilized Islam not as an antidote to communist movements, but also as a resource to create generation in line with the secular ideology (2003). Especially the election in 1983 was a noteworthy point in the history of interaction between the Islamist and the Kemalist. During this election, marginalized Islamist groups were able to mobilize due to their increasing legitimacy or political opportunity gains in the

struggle against the leftist groups, and their use of civil networks in the search for material power (Türsan, 2004). It is striking that starting from 1983 religious groups become more organized in offering welfare services, communal solidarity, and mobility to different segments of the society (Yavuz, Esposito, 2003).

Turgut Özal, yet indirectly, holds an important key role in the liberalization and especially mobilization of the Islamist or Islamic groups. During his office both as prime minister (1983-1989) and president (1989-1993), he encouraged and developed expansion of the freedom of association, speech, and assembly by removing the state monopoly over the broadcasting system and let Islamic movements construct an activist consciousness to shape the socio-political landscape of Turkey (2003). The eighties saw a proliferation of Islamic media in Turkey. This included propagation of new books on Islam, translations of classic twenty-century Islamist works from the Arab and Muslim world, new religious newspapers and journals, and Islam-oriented radio and television stations, which all attracted new followers and stimulated serious intellectual debate about Islam and relevance of Islamic values to social and political life (Fuller, 2008: 50). Islam started to be centred in discussions about several social and political issues in different contexts.

Another salient change also occurred in the economic structure of the country. The state used to impose high tariffs to create a Kemalist; that is secular, bourgeoisie (Yavuz, Esposito, 2003). Although the formation of a culturally diverse bourgeoisie had begun in late 1960s, the economic policies implemented by Turgut Özal resulted in the emergence of Muslim bourgeoisie. Following the 1980 military coup, liberal economic policies helped the creation of a countercultural bourgeoisie class with Anatolian rules (Yavuz, Esposito, 2003). Anatolia—the origin of the new domestic economic power—is important since Anatolia has been widely perceived to be more Islamic compared to the larger urban areas such as Istanbul. For the sake of economic liberalization, the new sector opposed state intervention in economy and later politics (Türsan, 2004).

While economic policies prospered new classes and a civil society including several Islamist groups, the Welfare Party (WP) was founded as the heir of NOP and insisted on the pursuit of an Islamic moral order (Arat, 2005). Unlike its predecessors, which had played a key role in the coalition governments of the 1970s but remained a minority party, the WP became the major opposition party in the country and then—following 1995 election in which it received the largest percentage of votes—the major coalition partner in government (5). In its 1993 convention, the WP described the system of ‘multiple orders’ and the freedom of the citizens to choose between legal orders, which would allow them to live by their beliefs (Gulalp, 1999). It had a remarkable effect in Turkish politics which was followed by the proposal of the

WP suggesting to amend the principle of secularism, which, the party claimed, was inadequate to meet the demands of the days and the needs of the major proportion of the population (Arat, 2005: 5).

In 1997 the military took a precaution against the Islamists. This move of the military was unlike the previous interventions to stop threats against the secular, unified Turkish Republic. After a convention of Islamist groups—in one of the suburbs of Ankara, Sincan—to protest the so-called Israeli invasion of Jerusalem and a call for unification of the Islamic world to save the Muslims from the invasion of the infidels, the tanks of the Turkish army passed through the streets of the district, which was famous for its highly conservative residents. The army reported that it was a transfer of the tanks from one base to another and the traffic necessitated the transfer through the residential area rather than the highways. Yet, it was popularly perceived as a cover for the warning against the Islamist leanings of the mayor of the district and the government encouraging such social meetings. After the ‘post-modern coup d’état’ the party leader of the WP was forced to resign from the government, the party was dissolved, and those who held key roles of the party was abolished from any political activity for certain periods.

The mid-1990s witnessed growing Islamist representation in parliament and Islamist electoral victories in key municipalities around the country including Ankara and Istanbul. The WP was quickly reincarnated as the Virtue Party (VP). Younger and more liberal Islamist reformers within the party distanced from the WP, hence the VP, and formed the JDP and figures closer to Erbakan formed the Felicity Party (FP) that had limited influence (Fuller, 2008: 50).

Founded in August 2001 under the leadership of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, a former mayor of Istanbul, the JDP can be perceived as the most successful of parties with a strong Muslim identity affiliation in Turkey. In 2002 the JDP came to national power on its own by winning a clear plurality—a first for parties in Turkey. However, the JDP defined itself in sharply different terms compared to parties perceived as its ancestors.

The era before 2000s witnessed the hardliners both from the Islamic and secular actors in Turkish politics. Yet, for many, the foundation of the JDP and its electoral victory opened a new era in the country. In this new era, it is widely perceived that a new type of party unique to Turkish politics took its place. For instance, ‘the radical period is over, predicted Akif Beki, Ankara correspondence for station Kanal 7’ (White, 2002: 86)—a channel popular for its coverage of Islamic programs, and religious figures. Islamism has become ‘religion’ related in terms of morals of individuals and civil life and the claim ‘Islamism has become Muslimhood, Islamism has been civilized’ was echoed by several key figures such Mehmet Aydın, who is an Islamic scholar and minister in JDP government (White, 2002: 86).

The Party, Aydin insists, no longer accepts the label “Moderate Islamist”. Rather, party members consider themselves to be “moderate Muslims” whose religious ethics inspire their public service as individuals but cannot be construed as part of their identities as political actors in the public sphere. JDP is a political movement and the movement’s actors have a very warm, close relationship, primarily as individuals, to religious experience... At the moment, I believe that all the ministers are fasting... We are religious people, but our actions in the public sphere ... do not have a religious side or theological meaning. Where is there a religious side? There is a link in our values. Just because I have become a politician, I am not about to leave the values I believe in by the wayside. As parallels he noted President George W. Bush’s personal religiosity and championing of “faith-based programs” as well as close relationship between church and state in some European countries (White, 2002: 87).

The JDP officially distanced itself from any formal relationship with Islam and acknowledged secularism or laicism as a fundamental prerequisite for democracy and freedom. However, it pointedly insisted that secularism be defined as “the state’s impartiality towards every form of religious belief and philosophical conviction” and that ‘the state, rather than the individuals, is restricted by this’ (Fuller, 2008: 50). In a sense, the JDP demanded the amendment of assertive secularism to be replaced by passive secularism.

Support for the JDP came from different classes—especially, the Anatolian middle class. This new class turned out to be a key source of financial support both for Turkey’s Islamist parties and non-political Islamic groups (49-50). In addition to this, the secular bourgeoisie, once holding the business as a monopoly, did not directly oppose the JDP for assuring that state (or military) did not intervene and economy was kept within the borders of liberal free economy (Fuller, 2008: vi). Traditionally minded Anatolian business class respected the secular leaders of the country as the saviours while they stressed its affiliation with the Ottoman past. They became apparent critiques of amnesia in the country that denied its Ottoman heritage.

Although the JDP found approval from certain segments of the society, its self-declared distance from former Islamist parties and policies was still received with suspicion by several parts of the Turkish voters, particularly

because of the leadership of many key figures from the old Erbakan parties (Fuller, 2008: 51). However, by several responses, the JDP tried to signal its commitment in overcoming the anxieties among several actors. The party emphasized its differences from the (former) Islamist parties and built up its support rapidly by establishing ties with the poor and mobilized civil society organizations (Öniş, Keyman, 2003: 100).

During the rule of JDP there have been several discussion and suspicions about the [secret] agenda of the party and its Islamist leanings. Several press statements from different civil organizations and responses from the party shared information and idea to ensure that there was no threat from JDP to the essentials of the society. Meetings between organizations and the party leaders became common in Turkish politics for assuring the secular and democratic structure of the country. From time to time, there have been incidences due the tension between JDP and military. However, the interaction between the military and the party has been essentially different compared to the ones in the past. Two incidences between the army elite and JDP or the Muslim identity in politics deserves attention since they are both crucial in understanding religious freedom and comparable to the incidences of the past periods. The election of Abdullah Gül as the president and the reaction of the army, and the 2008 party closure case are the most important events.

In 2007, after Gul was elected as the president of the country by the assembly dominated by JDP, the army grew concerned about the issue and by several channels asserted its right to protect democracy and secularism in the country. The military published a statement on the webpage of Turkish General Staff. The statement, which was named as 'electronic-declaration' or 'e-coup d'état,' mainly indicated that any attempt of reversing long-lasting democratic and secular regime of the country shall be encountered by the modern Turkish military following the path of M. Kemal Atatürk. The e-declaration created unrest in the country and perceived as the first signs of a military intervention that would suspend the civil rule in the country. Surprisingly, several organizations from both secular and Islamic camps gathered in demonstrations and boycotted any role of military in politics. The army was called to stay in the barracks and keep its hand off politics and the civil rule in the country. Unlike former military interventions, the army could not have proceeded to the further steps in politics. It was the civil society that appeared as a major actor in politics.

In the second event, the party closure case of 2008, the constitutional court concluded that JDP should not have been closed, as it does not have any explicit characteristics or policies violating the constitution or PPA. It was the first party closure case that was not against an Islamic party. The military was silent, and the civil society was active in supporting the triumph of law, freedom and democracy in the country. Most of the civil organizations were satisfied by

the conclusion of the case as it was believed to have served democracy and civil rule rather than the ideology of the military, or in general the secular elite.

The two salient events occurred in an environment where civil actors were empowered by the process of integration to EU. The democratic bargaining between the state establishment and the JDP forced the latter group to give up any search for governmental hegemony and to accept EU oriented democratic norms. Turkey's Islamic groups, more than the secularists, reluctantly supported the new democratic bargain because they intrinsically understand that this is the only way for them to come to power and secure certain levels of liberties within the country.

The process starting from 1950s can be summarized as the story or evolution of the hard-liner Islamic and seculars to their soft-liner versions. What does this process imply for regulation of religious identity in the public sphere? The shift from hard-liner seculars to the ones accepting—to an extent—the Islamic identity and being less eager to strictly control or intervene in politics means a more liberal religious market place. It signifies actors abstaining from promoting secularism as the main denomination in country but instead shift towards a less assertive regulation.

III. EVOLUTION OF ASSERTIVE SECULARISM

The process of interaction in the previous section can be briefly summarized by six main events and a transition period between two types of religious regulation or from assertive secularism to its lesser degrees. The military interventions in politics or control of the country before mid-1980s and the attempts of signalling the standing of the secular elite countered by the civil society are the main indicators of the level of assertive secularism.

The history clearly demonstrates two types of secular reactions against the role of religious identity in politics. In the period before mid-1980s the army did not hesitate to directly intervene in the regime and rule. The take-over by the military in three interventions and isolation of religious identity from politics is evident. Yet, in the period after 1980s, the military has had a more soft-liner standing. The religious identity gradually becomes freer and the appearance of Muslim identity in politics becomes more apparent. The period in between these two types of military and its preference or willingness of giving concessions from secular ideology is explanatory in the sense that it denotes the changes creating constraints upon the secular agents.

Starting from 1980s, the secular business class and the Muslim bourgeoisie converges in granting liberal economy that is highly sensitive to political unrest and state intervention. The liberal economy, and the business class within, demanding minimal state can be indicated as the decreasing legitimacy of communal and intervening ideology of the secular elite. Therefore, the emergence of the new business class and their counterparts supporting

liberalism becomes a new cost for the political survival of the secular actors that had regulated religious identity in previous periods. Moreover, religious regulation and its implications of political instability in the country turned to be constraints upon economic development and government revenue. These factors are pivotal in determining the fate of religious freedom. The transition period and the outcome in the behaviours of the key actors of secularism fits the model Gill (2005) describes that the degree of strict regulation of religious identity in public is determined by whether it serves the interests of the actors or not. Increasing cost of retaining strict control over religion is among the strongest explanation of the appearance of Muslim identity in Turkish politics and the recently achieved higher levels of democratization in the country.

The transition period in the country especially the changes between 1983 and 1993 denotes the importance of other factors in religious regulation in Turkey. It is evident that Islamic groups had enjoyed political space and abundance of resources during this period. Moreover, it is the era where civil society developed, and Islamist groups had the chance of mobilization. The mobilization or the Islamist networks pursuing welfare policies, the resources and political space available for them are also important in explaining the current religious freedom. It is highly likely that mobilized groups are costly to suppress, and it would be most costly if the mobilized religious groups share certain interests with the segments of the society previously supporting and legitimizing the repressive political actors.

It can be argued that religious freedom and furtherance in democratization in Turkey have been partly achieved due to the increasing cost of control of religious identity. For maintaining their political survival and keeping the economy in better conditions, the elite and the military had to shift to a soft-liner standing due to increasing costs and had to make concession, which, in turn, contributed to democratization. In other words, it is the power alignment and the cost-benefit functions of key actors for their survival with their affiliations in the political sphere. Therefore, most recent developments in the country can be analysed in order to foresee possible trajectories of closeness or openness of the political arena to certain identities with the help of Gill's theory of power alignment and cost-benefit ratios.

CONCLUSION

The victory of JDP in 2002 elections has attracted several studies of Islam and democracy and has been regarded as the success of the Islamic groups. A government by a party whose members, mostly, were members of closed Islamist parties was signified as a turning point in the country and as the start of a silent revolution. The moderation of assertive secularism and the preferences of the other actors—rather than religious—has taken no or little attention. However, JDP and its durability in the system should be regarded as a sign of emergence of a more liberal religious market due to the long-lasting

liberalization policies and changing dynamics of country that increased the cost of controlling religious identity.

The current situation in Turkey might be temporary and altered with any critical event in politics unless the ongoing liberalization is institutionalized. For example, if the common grounds between the secular business and Anatolian bourgeoisie is transformed to a phase in which positive endorsement of the identity of the latter is institutionalized, the cost of restricting religion or Muslim identity can decrease, and secular parties can reverse the current developments. This can be one of the possible critical points the Muslim politicians should consider in designing policies or institutions. Moreover, any threat implying the disappearance of certain groups or secular actors can raise the marginal utility of military intervention and hinder the recent developments in freedom of citizens and progress in democratization. Hence, the political environment of the country, especially in terms of identities or [religious] denominations, should be sterilized from any type of assertive policies or ideologies, including secularism or Islamism. The current power and cost-benefit configuration in politics should be stabilized and balanced even more both for the sake of individual freedom and democratization.

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