

EVOLUTION OF POLITICAL ISLAM: FROM THE WELFARE PARTY TO THE VIRTUE PARTY

(Türkiye’de Siyasal İslamın Evrimi)

Ekin Kadir SELÇUK*

ABSTRACT

Political Islam has been represented by National Outlook parties since 1970 in Turkey. These parties transformed their political discourse and became moderate in 1990s. This transformation especially was realized during the Virtue party period. In this paper I am going to present the moderation process from the Welfare Party to the Virtue party. I am going to discuss why this moderation occurred, which factors influenced transformation in political Islam in Turkey. To find reasons may help us to include other radical political movements into the system.

Keywords: Political Islam, Moderation, the Virtue Party

ÖZET

Türkiye’de siyasal İslam 1970 yılından beri Milli Görüş partileri tarafından temsil edilmektedir. Bu partiler 1990’larda dönüşüme uğramış ve ılımlı hale gelmişlerdir. Bu mutedilleşme bilhassa Fazilet partisi döneminde meydana gelmiştir. Bu çalışmada Refah Partisi’nden Fazilet partisine mutedilleşme süreci okura sunulacaktır. Bu partilerin niçin ılımlı hale geldiği, Türkiye’de siyasal İslam’ın niçin dönüşüme uğradığı tartışılacaktır. Nedenleri bulmak, diğer radikal siyasi hareketlerin sistem içine dahil edilmesini sağlayabilir.

Anahtar kelimeler: Siyasal İslam, Mutedilleşme, Fazilet Partisi

* KTÜ İletişim Fakültesi Araştırma Görevlisi, ekadir@bilkent.edu.tr

1. Introduction

In this paper, I am going to try to answer the question how the political discourse of the Welfare Party changed after it was replaced by the Virtue party and which factors were effective in the transformation of political Islam in Turkey?

In Turkish political system, pious people and their demands have been represented by many parties, especially by right-wing parties, however a special attention to Islam was given by 'National Outlook' parties before the coup in 1980 by the National Order Party and the National Salvation Party and after the coup by the Welfare Party. National Outlook parties and especially the Welfare party asserted that there was a moral degeneration in Turkish society because of giving up their traditions which came from the Ottoman past and imitating the West. They suggested more Islam in society and maybe in the state for overcoming this problem. Anti-Westernism was one of the aspects of them, because they believed that the West had become so powerful and subordinated especially Islamic countries by force. Western civilization was a wrong way and a wrong example for progress and development. 'Just Order' was a motto of the Welfare party which emphasized social justice and a third way between capitalism and socialism. Islam which originated moral values was also behind the 'Just Order'.

This discourse changed after the Welfare Party was outlawed on January 1998 by the Constitution Court, and the new Virtue Party was formed. The Virtue Party focused more on democracy, individual liberties and human rights. It interpreted secularism differently from old National Outlook parties and promoted a neutral state across all religions and beliefs. It also changed its anti-Western discourse and especially emphasized that Turkey should have entered to the European Union. In this paper I will try to open this transformation in political Islam from the Welfare party to the Virtue Party.

Moderation theory claims that radical parties revise their ideological views and moderate them for competing in pluralistic party system. They become pragmatic vote-seeking political parties and for that they come closer to the political center. They moderate to survive in the political system. Not only does electoral potential affect this moderation, but also the problem of legality and the threat of state repression have a role in this transformation. Many scholars argued against this dominant assumption that radical parties change because of these types of external factors. They focused on internal reasons such as change in the party leadership. In the paper, I will also argue which factors were more effective in the moderation of political Islam; electoral viability, state repression or internal factors.

2. Why do Radical Parties Moderate?

Tezcür (2010) asserts that, according to the moderation theory, when radical groups want to join legal political system, they give up their strict ideological stand and try to get closer to the political center. There are two basic reasons for that: Firstly, due to the fact that they accept to join elections, they want to get a high percent of vote as much as possible. Radical policies usually do not attract large population. Many scholars connect the moderation of radical and revolutionary parties to the fact that they become vote-seeking political parties. Moderation of parties helps to the consolidation of democracy in a country.

Examples were seen in socialist parties' moderation in Western Europe. Socialist parties in Western Europe turned into pragmatic, vote-seeking political parties to survive in the political system. We can see more examples in some Muslim countries where radical Islamic parties become Muslim reformers. Second reason in moderation is the threat of state repression. Legal boundaries of a state may not accept a radical party as legitimate. In addition to the fact that voters usually don't prefer parties which are under strict control of the state, these parties may be any moment ruled out and be declared as illegitimate. Therefore, to overcome legal problems and to attract masses, revolutionary and radical parties usually change their programs and discourses. According to Tezcür (2010), when compared with other Arab countries, in Iran and in Turkey, radical parties more incline to moderate because of pluralistic political systems and electoral competition in these countries.

Taniyıcı (2003) argues that by referring to Harmel and Janda, party transformation cannot be interpreted by a single theory. It is a very complex process and has many dimensions, such as transformation of organization, discourse, policy etc. He stresses that theories which explain party transformation according to external factors such as state repression or electoral competition are under criticism. These criticisms emphasize internal factors. For example Panebianco connects party transformation to an 'elite turnover'. Parties may moderate when leading groups in the party change. Wilson asserts that party leaders may see the change necessary. He connects the transformation to the personal decisions of party leaders. Harmel and Janda originated an integrated party change theory. According to them, parties change when leader changes, a dominant faction changes or external factors impose the change. They especially clarified the issue of external factors. External factors are social, economic and political events which accrue outside the party. External factors may become 'environmental shocks' when they avert the party to accomplish its own goals. Party leaders see necessary to respond these shocks and change for achieving party's goals (Taniyıcı, 2003).

Wickham (2004) also questions which factors cause political leaders to revise and moderate their aims and participate legal political systems. He says that many scholars studied on deradicalization of leftist parties in South America and in Western Europe and they usually asserted that these people wanted to use new political opportunities of participating elections which were created by the emergence of democracy. He stresses that, scholars' studies in Muslim world show that political openings and new opportunities in some Muslim countries also encourage radical groups to change and moderate. Ideological moderation has three aspects. "First, it refers to the stated positions of Islamist leaders and groups regarding the organization of domestic politics, rather than economics or foreign policy. Second, it refers to change in the stated views of an opposition leader or group relative to their positions in the past" (Wickham, 2004;206). And thirdly moderation may be rough. While in some areas moderation may be seen, in some areas radical positions may be taken. By studying on Egypt's Wasat Party which was founded by a group of people who left from a radical organization, Muslim brotherhood, he asserts that moderation may be caused by political learning as well as strategic assessment. By referring to Nancy Bermeo, Wickham (2004) argues that, especially in authoritarian regimes, radical opposition groups may cooperate with other opposition groups against state repression and authoritarian regime and this process may lead to a political learning and internalizing democratic values. However Tezcür (2010) reminds that moderation of radical groups in authoritarian regimes may not always turn into a democratization process. Radical parties may leave their ideas to survive within the rules of authoritarian regime and stop opposing against authoritarian decisions of the state.

3. Historical and Ideological Roots of the Welfare Party

3.1 Religion and Secularism in Turkey between 1923-1950

Islam and the state had experienced a litigious relationship since 1920s until transition to multi-party democracy in 1950s. This relationship between Islam and the state influenced the improvement of Islamic groups and political Islam in Turkey.

Founding fathers of the republic had planned a secular society and a state in which Islam would have no role. Kemalism aimed religion to stay in the private realm of citizens and not to influence social relations and the structure of the state. Rather than making a thick separation between religion and politics and leaving religious issues to citizens themselves, they preferred to control Islam and transform it to a state-religion (Tanıyıcı, 2003). Religious orders were ruled out and the Department of Religious Affairs was formed to control and organize all issues related with Islam. Religious orders and local Islamic communities were interpreted as threats against the Kemalist project.

The Kemalist project intended to form a homogeneous society under the citizenship of Turkishness in which Islam and other ethnic elements would not have any role. Although the Republican state wanted to transform political, social and cultural life fundamentally, the religion stayed as the main coordinator of daily lives of citizens (Yavuz, 1997). Özbudun and Hale (2010) stress that the state used public education to promote secular, nationalist and modernist values to the society. But ‘cultural revolution’ couldn’t be completed. Unlike state bureaucrats, army officers, urban professionals who deeply believed Kemalist enlightenment, rural masses stayed away from new ideals and sometimes created counter-groups against these ideals and the ruling elite. Heper (2009) also states that although Kemalism achieved a ‘cognitive revolution’ by which citizens learnt how to think rationally without referring any traditional and religious source, it failed to make a cultural revolution. The Republic couldn’t replace secular moral codes instead of moral values derived from religion. Islam had been embedded in social relations of society and it was much more stable than nationalism to create a community identity and political communication (Yavuz, 1997).

Because of state repression, religious groups didn’t have any voice in the political system until the 1950s. However Islamic groups continued to exist, were structured outside the control of the modern-secular state and “relied on traditional ties” (Yavuz, 1997;64). According to Narlı, the Islamist movement “was led by tarikat (religious order) sheikhs and professional men of religion, who lost their status and economic power when secular reforms abolished religious institutions” (Narlı, 1997;38). They couldn’t find sufficient support from other citizens, they were usually met with harsh decisions from the state and therefore remained underground. However, “top-down methods” (Özbudun and Hale, 2010; 17,18) of the state elite and efforts to put religion under state’s order “promoted the politicization of Islam and struggle between secularists and Muslims for control of the state” (Yavuz, 1997;65). The tension between state elites who identified themselves as secularists and modernists, and rural masses who adhere to traditional Islam, appeared at the end of the one-party system and shaped Turkish political sphere fundamentally.

3.2 Political Islam rises from the right-wing center in 1950s

Until 1950s, the center elite which were formed by army officers, senior bureaucrats, some notables and industrialists had governed Turkey. In 1946, Turkey transitioned to a multi-party system by the formation of the Democrat Party led by Adnan Menderes and Celal Bayar. People who had lived on the periphery of society and had been distanced from the power combined under the wings of the Democrat Party. The Party “represented the people of the periphery, including peasants and provincial bourgeoisie as well as the discontent of Islamists and religiously conservative people dissatisfied with secular policies” (Narlı, 1997;41). According to Özbudun and Hale (2010), the Democrat Party was very different from conservative parties in Europe. The founding fathers of the party included free professionals such as doctors, lawyers, businessmen and some landowners and notables who formed a counter-hegemony against the state elite which had governed Turkey since 1923. Founders of the party had an anti-establishment characteristic differently from conservative parties in western Europe. Islamist groups also joined to the Democrat Party and formed alliances with other groups and constituted conservative factions in the party (Narlı, 1997). After the military intervention in 1960, the Justice Party replaced the Democrat Party and continued to represent shopkeepers, small merchants who have a special sensitivity to Islam as well as peasants, traders, landowners, agrarian capitalists and the new bourgeois elements such as industrialists who all constituted opposition to the state-centric elites.

3.2.1 Political Islam, ‘National Outlook’ and its Parties

Gülalp (1999) asserts that in the first half of 1960s, owing to the fast economic development, the state could redistribute earnings of the rapid growth in an equal manner. But towards the end of the decade, economic growth had started to lose its effect and a differentiation of class interests emerged. The conflict between the “interests of the big industrialists and businessmen, most of them living in the larger cities with those of the small businessmen and artisans, mostly from the smaller towns of Anatolia” (Gülalp, 1999;33) caused the formation of a new political party.

In the Turkish political history, the first party “with clear Islamist credentials” was constituted in 1970 with the name of the National Order Party (NOP). The NOP was formed in January, 26, 1970 and Necmettin Erbakan became the leader of the party. According to Narlı (1997), the NOP was mainly supported by religiously conservative Sunnis in Anatolian cities. They could not have benefited from the fruits of modernization project due to their loyalty to traditional Islam and their position against the state-centric modernization project. The NOP’s class structure was based on Islamically sensitive small merchants, craftsmen, and small farmers. The party was strongly supported by the Naksibendi and Nurcu sects and especially by Mehmet Zahit Kotku, who had been the leader of İskender Paşa sect (Yavuz, 1997). The party was ruled out after the military intervention in March 12, 1971, and was replaced by the National Salvation Party in 1973.

Political parties formed by the leadership of Necmettin Erbakan since the NOP to the Felicity Party(FP) have referred their ideology as the National Outlook. The parties of the National Outlook have never been involved in political violence in Turkey (Yıldız, 2003). Although trying to act within legal borders of the secular establishment they usually have used Islamic symbols and terms. According to the National Outlook ideology there is a fundamental struggle between Islamic civilization and Western civilization. While Islamic civilization is based on justice, Western civilization is based on pressure and force. Ottoman Empire forms the heroic past of Islam. According to the founding fathers of the National

Outlook ideology, the Ottoman Empire lost its power after it had imitated the West. They also have seen Kemalist reforms as continuation of the imitation of West and have strongly argued against them (Özbudun and Hale, 2010).

The National Outlook is a combination of religious and non-religious issues and an effort to make politically a synthesis of Islam and modernism. Founders of the ideology interpreted modernism as a scientific and technological process which is completely separated from cultural and social transformation. This interpretation of development forms the center of the discourse of the National Outlook ideology: Spiritual development by Islam and material development by industrialization. Islam was needed because Turkish society was under a moral degeneration and it could overcome this degeneration only by relying on Islamic values. Degeneration of Turkish society has started in Ottoman period, Turkey and the whole Islamic world has been exploited by Western powers. In 1970s “heavy industrialization” (Yıldız, 2003; 189), was seen as the main way for material development and against western exploitation. The NSP successfully articulated heavy industrialization with its own themes. “It proposed to link its small-business base of support with the project of state-led heavy industrialization through the concept of the “broad-based private sector”” (Gülalp 1999;27). By this project, “the state would supervise the creation of these corporations where the owners of small capital would unite to launch heavy industry” (Gülalp, 1999;27).

National Outlook parties interpreted capitalism as a monopolistic economic system with large multinational or government-supported companies. Although they argued against this type of capitalism, they didn’t argue against private property or profit-making. They focused on conditions of small businesses which could not benefit much from the monopolistic capitalist system (Gülalp, 1999).

After the military intervention in 1980, the National Salvation Party was closed as well as other political parties and a new party which represented National Outlook ideology in 1983. While some of these features of National Ideology remained same, some others fundamentally changed.

4. The Welfare Party

4.1 Grassroots of the Welfare Party

The Welfare Party (WP) was established by the leadership of Ali Türkmen on July 19, 1983, as the new political party of National Outlook movement. Erbakan had been banned from political life. The party couldn’t join the first national elections after the coup in 1983, because the founding members of the party were vetoed by the decision of National Security Council. In the 1987 referendum, banned ex politicians like Demirel, Türkeş, Ecevit and Erbakan were allowed to enter into politics and then Necmettin Erbakan took over the leadership of the WP.

In 1980s, a group of small businessmen, small merchants and shopkeepers began to grow fast by new liberal political economy and export-oriented model of Özal and moved to big cities from provincial towns. In big cities they also had a chance for access to university education. A new business elite had originated from a provincial background. Özal’s model “provided opportunities not only to the established business elite, but also to the small and medium businessmen in Anatolian towns” (Narlı, 1997;40). Coming from Anatolian towns, this new business elite had differentiated itself from established business elite living in

Istanbul and represented by TUSIAD (The Association of Turkish Industrialists and Businessmen). Although they had started to experience a new life in big cities and competed with international companies within the rules of global economy, they wanted to protect their values, traditions and especially loyalty to Islam. They had been called as ‘Anatolian Lions’ and they assembled under the name of MUSIAD, the Association of the Independent Industrialists and Businessmen (Narlı, 1997). While the NOP and the NSP had represented religiously oriented small merchants and shopkeepers of Anatolian towns, the Welfare Party was mainly supported by this Islamic business elite. But of course, it was not the only vote base of the WP. Since the 1950s with a migration wave from Anatolian towns to the periphery of big cities, rural poverty had transformed into urban poverty. Immigrants who are often economically disadvantaged, culturally disintegrated, and politically isolated supported the Welfare Party (Narlı, 1997). The Welfare Party’s “class base primarily includes, in addition to the petty bourgeoisie of provincial towns, members of the young professional middle class, students, and a large marginalized and dispossessed population in the metropolitan centers”(Gülalp, 1999;33). These were supporters of the party in big cities. In Anatolia, “some ultra-nationalists who have embraced Islamist attitudes and a sizeable number of religiously conservative Sunni Kurds, who assume that an Islamic order could possibly bring solutions to the conflict in their region” (Narlı, 1997;42) also constituted the electoral base of the party.

4.2 New Motto of the Party: The Just Order

At the Third General Convention in 1990, the famous slogan of the National Outlook ideology, ‘Just Order’ was used for the first time and then spread as fundamental motto of the WP. By the motto of Just Order it was intended to mean “social solidarity, the prevention of wasteful expenditures, justice in taxation, equal treatment of all in the allocation of state credits, the abolition of interest” (Yıldız, 2003; 191,192). Yavuz states that the Just Order does not indicate a welfare state. “It stands for the prevention of injustice and religious discrimination against pious people” (Yavuz, 1997;74). Islam as totally generating ethical norms was standing on the basement of Just Order. Özbudun (2006) asserts that, just order was interpreted as a middle way between socialism and capitalism. It mainly supported state controls on economy. According to Mecham (2004), the NSP was a conservative religious party, but the WP focused on social justice and demanded votes from traditionally leftist constituencies. Generally the WP claimed to bring social justice, liberty of religion, ethnic tolerance and to stop Turkey’s exploitation by the West, threats of ‘imperialist Zionist system’ against Turkey’s national independence and state (Mecham, 2004). For Yıldız, the WP “was a protest movement”(Yıldız, 2003;188). The WP suggested “an institutional framework for the voiceless and suppressed masses of Turkey” (Yavuz, 1997;74).

4.2.1 Anti-Westernism and Religious Nationalism

National Outlook parties strongly opposed against relations with the West. “Basic characteristics of this tradition have been anti-Westernism, anti-Europeanism and the promise of a community and state based on national and Islamic sources” (Tanıyıcı, 2003;470). As we said that, the movement strongly opposed against republican reforms because they thought that they were continuations of an imitating process of the West. When Turkish-Islam society moved away from its traditional values to western values, it morally and economically collapsed. Therefore the WP carried out anti-American, anti-European, and anti-Zionist policies. The party aimed to establish close relations with third world countries and especially with Muslim countries. They wanted to constitute an Islamic monetary union, Islamic

common market, Islamic NATO (Özbudun, 2006). European Union was regarded as a 'Christian club'. And as Özbudun and Hale reminded "Erbakan has gone so far as suggesting that once Turkey becomes an EU member, Israel would also join the organization immediately and thus Turkey and Israel would be the same state" (Özbudun and Hale, 2010;6). Although the party focused more on democracy, individual rights, freedom of religion in the 1995 election, it didn't change its view against the West (Tanıyıcı, 2003).

One of the basic characteristics of National Outlook ideology was religious nationalism. These parties aimed to form a Muslim brotherhood with Muslims who live in other countries and wanted to preserve not only Turkish Muslims' but also other Muslims' interests. Turkey's role would be the leadership of Islamic world and would direct its struggle against Western imperialism. According to Yıldız (2003), main reason of the emergence of Islamic nationalism was the coexistence of Islamism and nationalism in same organizations which started at the beginning of multi-party system. As we remind that, political Islamists formed some factions with other conservative groups until the NOP was formed. Therefore "the conception of an anti-Western Islamism structured by a national Islamism/Islamic nationalism, with a heavy emphasis both in NSP and WP, became one of the main leitmotifs characterizing their politico-religious discourse" (Yıldız, 2003; 197).

While giving its name to the movement, the founding fathers of the movement used the duality included in the word of 'milli' (national). Although 'milli' means national in Turkish, it also reflected religious implies. They "used a dual discourse by ascribing the national to the religious" (Yıldız, 2003;201).

How did the WP approach to democracy, what have founding fathers of the movement thought about democratic values? According to Özbudun, it was not clear whether the party aimed to establish a Islamic state or not? In some public organizations the party claimed to constitute a 'real democracy', however elites of the party never said anything about what they understood by 'real' democracy. (Özbudun, 2006; 544) As Yıldız (2003) stated, National Outlook movement was never involved in political violence. They were Muslim reformers and like other Muslim reformers they "accept the inviolability of political pluralism, competitive elections and human rights at base level" (Tezcür, 2010;70). They saw national elections as the only legitimated means for coming to the power. Nevertheless, Özbudun asserts that their understanding of democracy was majoritarian rather than pluralistic. They saw democracy not as an end in itself, rather as a means for an 'order of happiness' (Özbudun, 2006). As we know that the same discourse was used by Recep Tayyip Erdoğan during his mayoralty. Tezcür (2010) also agrees that their belief in democracy was majoritarian. Özbudun and Hale (2010) stress that their views on secularism were nor clear. They interpreted established secularism in Turkey as a repressive means for Muslims. Although they promoted religious freedom, they didn't say much thing about relationship between the state and Islam.

5. Moderation in Political Islam

5.1 The Virtue Party

The Welfare Party formed a coalition government with the True Path Party in 1996. They had stayed in power for 11 months. On 28 February 1997, in the National Security Council commanders of the Turkish army oppressed the government to make some arrangements around strict secular principles. During the process which is called 28 February,

coalition government was oppressed by the military establishment and accused of changing secular system of Turkey. In May 1997, a case to ban the Welfare was opened because violating the secular principles of the constitution. One month later, Erbakan was forced to resign. The party was banned on January 1998 by the Constitutional Court. However Erbakan was experienced and already had ordered his lawyer, İsmail Alptekin to establish a new party before the decision of the Constitutional Court. On December 1997, the Virtue Party (VP) was established. After the closure of the Welfare, all former Welfare deputies, except banned Erbakan and five members of the party, joined the Virtue Party. Recai Kutan, who is a moderate person and loyal to Erbakan became the new leader of the party.

The Virtue Party focused on human rights, democracy, and rule of law much more than the Welfare. Main messages of the Virtue consisted of a need for real democracy and human rights in Turkey. Party elite wanted political liberties to expand. They interpreted secularism differently from the Welfare period and focused on negative religious liberties. The state should have been impartial to religions and beliefs. It shouldn't have imposed any religion to its citizens. It should have helped its citizens to learn, practice and organize their religion (Narlı, 1997). They defended that secularism was understood as a religion by state elites and was imposed to citizens. They argued against the headscarf ban because it was against personal liberties and human rights. They changed their discourse that Turkey is not religious enough to Turkey is not democratic enough (Mecham, 2004).

The Virtue Party didn't use the motto of the just order and it supported a free market economy with an emphasis to social justice. But perhaps the most important change in the party's discourse was in foreign policy (Özbudun and Hale, 2010). It didn't see the West as an enemy power and gave up its anti-western discourse. It especially supported Turkey's membership to the EU. EU was not a Christian club, it was an institution which promoted universal democratic values. The improvement of democracy in Turkey was depended upon Turkey's membership to the EU. After the VP was ruled out by the Constitutional Court, two parties, the Felicity Party and the Justice and Development Party rose. Although they have defended very different policies from each other, both of them have insisted upon the importance of Turkey's EU membership (Tanıyıcı, 2003). The party sent a public relation mission to the USA to tell its difference from the WP. New members with center-right conservative backgrounds who didn't have any relationship with the National Outlook joined the party (Mecham, 2004). The VP also recruited some famous women intellectuals, renewed 60 percent of its members and organized meetings in which men and women mix freely. In the Welfare period these meetings were usually sexually segregated (Narlı, 1997). According to Yıldız, the Virtue party "was essentially not a party of political Islam but a liberal-conservative party with a powerful social state inclination and a strong interest in nationalism" (2003, 199). Daniel Brumberg says that there are three types of Islamism. In the second type, moderate Islamists participate to elections and use pluralistic political environment for coming to the power. They don't use political violence however their main goal is to change secular system. According to the third type, liberal Islamists want to extend religious liberties as much as possible, but they don't aim an Islamic state and authoritarian government. Özbudun and Hale (2010) assert that while the WP belongs to the second type, the Virtue Party might be included in the third group.

5.2 Reasons Behind the Moderation

If we return to the moderation theory, radical parties transform and come to the center because of being vote-seeking political parties and for overcoming the problem of legality. By

joining elections they accept to be preferred by majority for coming to the power. Therefore they need to get the highest percentage of vote among other parties. Radical demands are usually not favored by the majority and to be favored by the majority they usually choose to moderate their discourse and policy (Tezcür, 2010).

Before the Welfare Party, the National Outlook parties couldn't get more than 12 percent of the total vote. However they joined coalition governments firstly with Bülent Ecevit's Republican People's Party and then with Süleyman Demirel's Justice Party and Alparslan Türkeş's Nationalist Action Party, therefore they were highly effective and important in Turkish politics. After the military intervention in 1980, a problem emerged for radical parties like for the Welfare; threshold problem. According to the new constitution, a party wouldn't have any seat in the parliament if it can't get at least 10 percent of the total vote. Military establishment blamed coalition governments for not stopping political chaos in the country before the military intervention and therefore aimed one-party government and prevent existence of radical parties in the parliament. The Welfare Party firstly joined local elections in 1984 and took 4 percent of the vote. In the 1987 parliamentary elections, it couldn't go beyond the threshold. In the 1989 local elections, the party's vote increased to 9.8 percent however it was still under the threshold. Therefore in the legislative elections of 1991, Welfare entered into a temporary electoral coalition with Türkeş's party and with the Reformist Democracy Party, in an effort to secure a showing above the 10% electoral threshold. Under this arrangement, the party won almost 17% of the vote; it was an important increase. But real growth of the party accrued in the 1994 local elections. The party took 20 percent of the vote and 29 larger cities' mayors were elected from the Welfare Parties' candidates including Istanbul's and Ankara's mayors. When it is compared with the past, in the 1977 elections, the NSP took 6 percent of the vote in Istanbul and Ankara. However, in the 1994 elections, the WP took 25 percent and in Ankara 21 percent (Gülalp, 1999). The party became the biggest party in the parliament after 1995 general elections. It took 21 percent of the total vote. Although it was not in the center, the Welfare Party was preferred more than other center-right and center-left parties. The Virtue Party joined only 1999 general and local elections. Its vote decreased to 15 percent when we compare with the WP. Therefore it seems that moderation didn't attract masses to the party; on the contrary the Virtue Party lost 6 percent of the vote of the WP. Therefore we can say that moderation of the VP was not due to the electoral competition and because of being a vote-seeking party. It is difficult to say that elites of the National Outlook ideology preferred coming to the center for increasing their vote, because the Welfare Party's vote had already been high.

As we mentioned before, Harnel and Janda assert that parties change when leader changes, a dominant faction changes or external factors impose the change (Tanıyıcı, 2003). In 1990s a schism appeared in the party and tension between so-called traditionalists and reformists in the party rose after the Welfare Party was closed. Reformists lead by Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, who was elected as the mayor of İstanbul in 1994 elections, challenged against Erbakan's control over the party. However reformists couldn't come to the power in the Virtue Party and separated their ways from traditionalists. Policy and discourse of the Virtue Party was determined by Erbakan and loyalists to him. Therefore we cannot find reasons of the moderation in internal factors. We should look at external factors. And as we said that, political competition and aim to get more vote was not the reason in Virtue's moderation. So only one reason remains; state repression.

5.2.1 28th February Process

Harnel and Janda argue that external factors may become ‘environmental shocks’ when they avert the party to accomplish its own goals. Party leaders see necessary to respond these shocks and change for achieving party’s goals (Tezcür, 2010). 28 February process became an environmental shock for elites of the Welfare Party (Tanıyıcı, 2003). On 28 February 1997, in the National Security Council meeting, commanders of the Turkish Army Forces oppressed to the government to make some legal arrangements against Islamicization of the society. Army elites also started a campaign against the government, organized meetings with media, business and bureaucratic elites, told the danger of a revolution to the Sheri law and role of the government in it. Military establishment aimed to overturn WP-TPP government and design the country again across Kemalist lines.

After the military intervention on 12 September 1980, new establishment had used Islam for stopping polarization and creating a homogenous, disciplined society. They had used Islamic symbols for legitimization. An ideology which is called Turkish-Islamic synthesis had been activated. It had been formed by some conservative intellectuals who had organized under the name of Association of Intellectuals' Heart (Yavuz, 1997). It had been a different interpretation of secularism which was promoting more Islam in the society and obedience of the nation to the powerful state. Religious courses became compulsory in all elementary schools and Turkish-Islamic ideology spread by public institutions across the country.

28 February process was a u-turn from this interpretation of secularism. It promoted strict secular ideology of the early republican period. Secular ideals of the republic and the threat of anti-secularism were reminded by schools, universities, media, civil-military bureaucracy to the society. Its aim was also to homogenize the society but this time around strict secular principles. Military establishment blamed political parties because of acting irresponsibly; the state which was represented by military establishment subordinated the politics. Army commanders dominated public agenda by emphasizing the danger for national security. Political parties were obliged to follow views of military elites. “Since February 28th, Turkish political parties have retreated from a constituency-serving position to a state-supporting one” (Cizre and Çınar, 2003;317).

This period was an environmental shock for elites of the National Outlook (Tanıyıcı, 2003). Cizre and Çınar (2003) stresses that they chose to adapt themselves to this period and therefore they de-Islamized their discourse. According to Meham, “the story of Virtue is a story of how institutional constraints alter the strategic calculus of Islamist leaders” (Mecham, 2004;349). They were afraid of a military intervention or ban of the party; therefore state repression determined their moderation. Özbudun and Hale (2010) also assert that results of 28 February might affect the transformation in the discourse of National Outlook. Party elites “realized the need to change the party’s discourse and policies in order to survive in the new repressive environment” (Tanıyıcı, 2003;476).

6. Conclusion

In this paper I wanted to explain the change in the discourse of Erbakan’s parties from the Welfare Party to the Virtue party. It is difficult to say that whether the Virtue Party is a rupture from the National Outlook ideology. According to Yıldız (2003) the Virtue party was not a political Islamist party unlike the Welfare Party and it acted as a liberal conservative party. It was a rupture from the National Outlook tradition. Özbudun and Hale (2010) asserted that unlike the Welfare Party, the Virtue Party accepted pluralistic political system and abandoned its aim which was to alter secular laws of the state. While we can’t accept or

oppose this view, we can say that political discourse completely changed from the Welfare Party to the Virtue Party. The discourse changed from focusing on moral degeneration which should have been corrected by ‘more Islam’ in society and maybe in the state, to the focusing on insufficient democracy which could be corrected by Turkey’s entrance to the EU.

National Outlook movement was not a mainstream ideology and its electoral potential was limited. However during the Welfare period, it compelled its limits and became the largest political party in the parliament. The moderation in its discourse didn’t enlarge its electoral potential. On the contrary, the Welfare’s vote in 1995 elections decreased in the Virtue period. Of course the Welfare wanted to increase its vote like all political parties, however it was not an urgent need and results show that moderation was not a good way for that.

Although a group of reformers started a struggle against party elites, they couldn’t affect party policies during the Virtue Party. So the transformation was not due to the change in the leadership of the party. Searches on this issue show us that moderation was a result of an ‘environmental shock’: It was 28 February process. Party elites understood that it is impossible to drive a policy against military bureaucracy and secular roots of the republic. To survive, they had to change.

However, moderation in the Virtue Party’s discourse couldn’t convince the bureaucracy and the Virtue Party shared the same fate with other National Outlook parties. After the Virtue Party was closed, reformists established the Justice and Development Party and they separated their way from the National Outlook ideology. National Outlook has represented by the Felicity Party since 2001 and Erdogan became again the leader of the party in 2010. For anyone who wants to interpret the progress in the National Outlook movement, the Felicity party stands as a new research field.

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