The Inclusion-Moderation Thesis and Turkey's AKP: The Transition from Conservative Democracy to Conservatism

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Summary

The discussion on the relevance of the 'inclusion-moderation' thesis to the Islamist parties has always been very stimulating. The rise of the Justice and Development Party (AKP, *Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*) in Turkey has so far attracted the attention of international community in a period depicted with the intensification of a civilizational discourse on a global scale since the early 2000s. The main premise of the study is that the 'inclusion-moderation' thesis is not explanatory for the Islamists in Turkey. It is rather 'exclusion-moderation' thesis, which is more explanatory for the moderation experience of the Islamists since the 1960s. AKP was established in 2001 as an off-spring of the traditional oppositional political Islam in Turkey, which is renown as "National Outlook" movement. The name of the Party very successfully addressed at the two missing elements of the Turkish state and society, "justice" and "development". The Party came to power in 2002 in the aftermath of the one of the most devastating economic crisis hitting the country in 2001. Starting with a very democratic, inclusive, cohesive, liberal, universalist and fair political discourse, the Party gradually became more and more anti-democratic, authoritarian, populist, polarizing, neo-Ottomanist and Islamist at the expense of liberal, secular, non-Sunni, non-Muslim, and other oppositional social groups. Election Declarations (*Seçim Beyannameleri*) as well as the speeches of the party leaders will be discursively analysed to find out whether there is any *behavioural moderation* in the AKP before and after they came to power. The same documents and speeches will be scrutinized to understand whether there is an *ideological moderation* in the party. The focus will be on the latter to detect the ways in which the AKP leadership has so far deployed an Islamist ideology, which has lately become coupled with a populist political style.

Keywords: authoritarianism, Islamism, laicism, secularism, Islamization, political Islam, populism, governmentality, neo-liberalism

The State of the Art: 'Inclusion-Moderation' Thesis

There has been a great interest in the scientific world about the explanations for why radical parties successfully integrate into the mainstream when included in politics (Buehler, 2012). A great variety of scholars from different fields have employed various interpretations of the inclusion-moderation hypothesis. Ranging from John Stuart Mill (1859) to Jürgen Habermas (1989), many scholars have so far discussed the ways in which inclusive politics has moderated and transformed radical political parties into democratic parties. In the "inclusion-moderation" literature, two different sides of moderation are mostly discussed: *behavioural moderation* and *ideological moderation.* Advocates of the former perceive moderation as the calculated behaviour radical parties display to secure access to power (Huntington, 1991; Kalyvas, 1996, 2000; Somer, 2011; Tezcür, 2010a, 2010b; Tepe, 2005, 2012). These studies 'measure' moderation by analysing the changes in party documents and guidelines, political pragmatism of the leading figures of radical parties to enter political coalitions with parties across the political spectrum. The advocates of this approach are criticized by other scholars who believe that a focus on behaviour might be insufficient to detect whether such parties are really moderated. Accordingly, party members might simply pretend to be more moderate in opposition and revert to illiberal politics once in power (Schwedler, 2006, 2011). The critics of the former tend to search for manifestations of ideological moderation in party documents or the discourses of party cadre on sensitive issues related to their ideological stance (Schwedler, 2007; Wickham, 2004). The advocates of the latter, hence, tend to detect the ideological moderation to understand whether the party has really become democratic or not.

The roots of the concept of *behavioural* and *ideological moderation* can be traced back to the work of the German sociologist, Robert Michels (1876-1936) who had his seminal work *Political Parties* (1966/1911) on the behavioural evolution of political elites. Following the Weberian logic of bureaucracy and specifically looking at the Germany's Social Democrat Party (SPD), he concluded that bureaucratization of movements prompts their leaders to deviate from the preferences of their followers who are still committed to the original mission. Specifically looking at the moderation of the socialist movement into a social democratic party, Michels, normatively speaking, detested the moderating effects of organization leading to the weakening of "revolutionary currents" in society. Michels' study of the German SPD (1911) led him to coin the term 'iron law of oligarchy', which described the concentration of power in the hands of a small group of party leaders. Accordingly, organizational structures and functions propel elites towards the needs of self-preservation, which result in concessions manifesting in policies and positions. Once parties partake in the electoral process, "principles" are obstacles to the aim of increasing

membership. While Michels see this moderation of socialist parties as a negative development, his work was a pioneering one that shaped the theory of moderation.

'Inclusion-moderation' thesis assumes that electoral institutions encourage radical parties to adjust their agendas to broaden their constituencies in a political system in which one needs a certain proportion of the votes to realize political goals (Buehler, 2012). This assumption was rightfully tested for socialist parties in Western Europe (Przeworski, 1980), workers' parties in Latin America (Keck, 1992), pro-Catholic parties (Kalyvas, 2000), and Islamist parties (Tezcür, 2010a, 2010b) competing in democratic elections. The underlying assumption of this thesis is that political parties abandon radical agendas and claims because of the strategic pursuit of their interests under certain institutional conditions (Kalyvas, 1998).

Although, the 'inclusion-moderation' thesis is the leading theoretical stance dealing with the inclusion of radical parties in the world ranging from socialist to religious parties, it seems to fall short to address the aftermath of the act of inclusion of such radical parties such as the Islamist parties that come to power (Brocker and Künkler, 2013; Jaffrelot, 2013; Pahwa, 2017). Another important weakness of the theory is that it cannot really address whether radical parties' moderation is real, or instrumental (Kirdiş and Drhimeur, 2016; Kalyvas, 2000). The relevant literature though, asserts that radical parties may not necessarily become more moderate ideologically, but may adjust their behaviour in accordance with institutional and structural incentives (Kalyvas, 2000). Whereas, it still falls short to evaluate whether these parties will shed some of their 'moderation' once they gain power. In a way, inclusion-moderation thesis seems to be successful in explaining the ways in which oppositional Islamist parties moderate themselves to enjoy emerging political opportunities and to increase their public support, it fails to understand the ideological drives of Islamist parties in power to transform the political and societal structure (Gürses, 2014).

The literature proposes two types of moderation, *behavioural* and *ideological moderation*, neither of which sufficiently explains the politics of current Islamist parties in power. Under behavioural moderation, the literature studies how Islamist parties downplay their ideological persuasions by introducing more moderate rhetoric to appeal to a wider population of voters (Kirdiş and Drhimeur, 2016). However, behavioural moderation fails to explain the political behaviour of current Islamist parties in power as it cannot understand how their strategies diverge once in power. As it will be displayed in the AKP case, like any other pragmatist political party in power, Islamist parties in power are also likely to aim to engage in the socio-political reforms they have been striving for in politics for decades. Hence, ideological moderation side of the theory also partly fails to explain the ideological drives of Islamist parties in power. This article will scrutinize the ways in which the AKP leadership performed to sustain their power since 2002. The main premise of the article will be that it is the *populist political style* of the leader of the AKP, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan,

coupled with his sectarian Islamist ideology, which has gradually become more explicit after 2007 when the presidential power was taken from the Kemalist elite by the Islamist Abdullah Gül. Hence, the article will assume that the 'inclusion-moderation' thesis successfully explains the ways in which the AKP became a democratic political party along with the deepening of the European integration process until 2007, and that since the beginning of growing Euroscepticism long with the opening of the Accession Negotiations with the EU in 2005 it has been reverting to the perspective of the parent movement, National Outlook movement, from which it has originated.

Genealogy of Oppositional Political Islam in Turkey

The genealogy of the Islamist parties in Turkey (*Milli Nizam Partisi*-National Order Party 1970-1971, *Milli Selamet Partisi*-National Salvation Party 1972-1980, *Refah Partisi*, Welfare Party 1983-1998, *Fazilet Partisi*, Virtue Party 1998-2001, *Saadet Partisi*, Felicity Party, 2001-present; and *Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*, Justice and Development Party, 2001-present) shows that they have continued to underline their radical Islamist ideology and behaviour through four decades interrupted by Kemalist military coups in 1960, 1971, 1980 and 1997. All these military coups were different in nature, and the article will not go into any detail to explain them individually due to the limited space of the article.[1] Almost all the Islamist parties except the AKP were established under the leadership of Necmettin Erbakan (1926-2011), who was the main oppositional Islamist political leader challenging the laicist, secular, modernist, pro-European and Kemalist political system for four decades. Erbakan experienced three military coups (1971, 1980 and 1997), and after each coup, he managed to revive his political movement under another name without really changing the recurrent tropes that he was always deploying to attract his constituents (Kaya, 2015). Necmettin Erbakan's 'National Outlook' (*Milli Görüş*) movement and 'Just Order' (*Adil Düzen*) concept mostly shaped his political discourse through his career. In his quantitative survey, Kılavuz (2015) finds that Erbakan's Islamist political discourse has always remained unchanged as far as his Islamist, anti-laicist, anti-secularist, anti-European, anti-IMF (International Monetary Fund), anti-free market, and pro-Arab inclinations were concerned.

The break-up of the progressive elements within the National Outlook movement took place in the power struggle in the aftermath of the 1997 military coup, which is known as "postmodern coup", or '28 *Şubat darbesi'* (28 February coup) among the Turkish public. The difference of February 28 coup from the other military interventions was the choice of the army to mobilize and utilize civilian politicians for its causes rather than practically taking over the administration of the state. In this process, the army led political prosecutions and National Security Council that was comprised of high-ranking generals, president, prime ministers and ministers gave the main

[1] For more detail on the military coups in Turkey see Zürcher (2003) and Gürsoy (2017).

legislative decision. The coup was named as a 'military rule under the civilian disguise', or more commonly, a postmodern coup (Kılavuz, 2015; Kaya, 2015; Belge, 2004).

After the Welfare Party was banned by the Constitutional Court in 1998, the National Outlook movement founded a new party called *Fazilet Partisi* (FP, Virtue Party) under the leadership of Recai Kutan since Erbakan was prohibited from politics. The experience of political prosecutions and exclusion triggered an ideational division between party cadre. As a result, two groups emerged in competition for the leadership of the party. The younger generation was comprised of the members who were mostly in their forties and fifties and had already started to moderate in the early 1990s. Abdullah Gül, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Bülent Arınç, Abdüllatif Şener, Binali Yıldırım, and İdris Naim Şahin were the leading founders of the reformists (*Yenilikçiler*). On the other hand, the elder generation was the group of Erbakan's close aides since the early years of the movement. They were named as traditionalists (*gelenekçi*) by the media as they were loyal to the National Outlook movement (Kaya, 2015; Özcan, 2001; Çakır, 2001).

The division later turned into a power struggle in the Party convention held in May 2000. Traditionalists' candidate was the current leader of FP, Recai Kutan, and reformists' candidate was Abdullah Gül. The race ended with a slight victory of the traditionalists. However, reformists became much more successful than expected and this only intensified the split within the party leading to their decision to leave the Virtue Party and to establish their own party under the name of Justice and Development Party in 2001.[2] In the meantime, the Constitutional Court decided once more to shut down the Virtue Party on the basis of the claims that the Party was just a continuation of its predecessor, Welfare Party. Exclusion of the Virtue Party from the political system led the newly established Justice and Development Party to generate a more systemic political behaviour and ideology. Behavioural moderation of the AKP is partly explicable through the agency of the leading actors in the party cadre. Abdullah Gül's close contacts in Europe and his pro-European inclinations, which he made during the times he spent in Strasbourg as a member of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's popularity as the mayor of the largest city in Turkey, Istanbul, and Bülent Arınç's popularity among the pious Muslims in Turkey were probably the quintessential elements of the potential success of the new political Party (AKP) (Kaya and Kentel, 2005). On the other hand, ideological moderation of the AKP is based on the disavowal of the political discourses and tropes of the National Outlook movement (Kılavuz, 2015; Kirdiş and Drhimeur, 2016). The reformists simply generated a much more moderate political discourse based on the explicit negation of the tropes of the parent

[2] The naming of the new Party in a very similar way to the ones in the Muslim Brotherhood circles in North African countries was striking. The Party of Justice and Development (PJD) in Morocco is exemplary in this sense, the origins go back to 1967 when the *Mouvement populaire démocratique et constitutionnel*, (Popular Democratic and Constitutional Movement) was launched by Abdelkrim al-Khatib. The movement was not active in electoral process until 1997 when its name was changed to the Party of Justice and Development (Bokhari, 2014).

movement, National Outlook. The recurring tropes of the new party were in line with the political system and did not challenge the secularist, laicist, pro-European, and Kemalist nature of the Turkish state structure (Kaya, 2013; Kılavuz, 2015).

The Rise of Political Islam in the aftermath of the 1980 Military Coup

The state-centric Kemalist regime was confronted with the challenge of ethno-cultural and religious groups in the aftermath of the 1980 military coup (Keyman and Öniş, 2007:16). The military coup and the policies undertaken by the military government up until 1983 revealed that the military elite made a profound attempt to eradicate the sources of social strife emerging from the conflict between the rightists and leftists and between diverse ethno-cultural communities in the 1970s, and to rebuild social-political cohesion (Cizre 1996: 245-246). To this end, the military elite in alliance with the country's big business circles, the Islamist and Nationalist intellectuals of the Hearth of Intellectuals (*Aydınlar Ocağı*) and their colleagues in the universities, the press and the media wholeheartedly began to pursue a project of restructuring the society in such a way that the conservative and Islamist sources of culture were accommodated in the homogenous modern Turkish national identity.

Parallel to the inclusion of Islamist aspects in the national culture, the policy of economic liberalisation was regarded by the military elite and big business as a necessary means to structure a new social and economic order. Both the accommodation of the Islamist forces and economic liberalisation were expected to avoid polarisation and fragmentation among the political parties supported by diverse social forces contesting for resources, and to shape the social order (Cizre, 1996). It was in this political context after the 1980 military coup that it became possible to see the Islamist forces, values and themes more pervasively involved in political, social and economic spheres. For instance, the Islamist orders and communities (*Sufi tarikats*) infiltrated the political parties, government, civil service, and the business and banking sectors. Moreover, Prime Minister Turgut Özal, who was backed by the military in the formation of the new conservative and economically neo-liberal order, met the leaders of some Sufi *tarikats* for Friday prayers. In the meantime, mandatory religious instruction in primary and secondary schools was introduced by the military regime led by Kenan Evren (Cizre, 1996: 244; Tuğal, 2009; Navaro-Yashin, 2002).

The Islamist forces were incorporated into the new socio-economic order in which the big business circles in the centre and the peripheral Anatolian petite bourgeoisie circles integrated and coexisted within the structure of a neo-liberal economy. Hence, they were used by the new state elite to counter-balance the leftists and highly mobilized urban working class (Özbudun, 2000: 26-27). The Islamist forces did not emerge as a challenge to the secular and republican regime; they

rather became an integral part of it, constituting and maintaining the status quo of the neo-liberal and capitalist order, which enabled the military and state elite to sustain the political regime.

Another important political phenomenon in the 1990s was the rise of political Islam, which brought about a different dynamic in domestic politics. Necmettin Erbakan defined his movement against the West in general, and the Kemalist vision of Europeanization (Yavuz, 2006: 243). Although Erbakan incorporated EU membership into his agenda in the 1999 elections, the formation of the AKP introduced yet another form of political Islam. To that effect, Yavuz suggests that the prospect of European integration had strong influences on political Islamic movements in Turkey. He argues that

"Since the early 1990s, however, a dramatic cognitive shift has taken place in Turkey. Islamic political identity is shifting from an anti-Western to a pro-European position, while conversely, the Kemalist bureaucratic-military establishment, which has defined its historic mission as that of guardians leading the nation westward, has become increasingly recalcitrant in regard to integration with Europe. Today one of the few unifying platforms of Turkey's diverse ethnic and religious groups is one favouring membership in the EU (Yavuz, 2006: 226)."

In analysing the wide public support for the AKP, Yavuz suggests that the party's promotion of accession is the search for political identity through the EU process, which is founded on identification with the European norms of the Christian Democratic parties. In relation to that, he argues that the AKP utilized the process of accession to reduce the power of the military through defining "itself against the military" (Yavuz, 2006: 246). In other words, he attributes the pro-EU stance of the AKP to the search for self-identification, which occurred in opposition to the military establishment in Turkey. In this sense, AKP was much more successful than the Welfare Party in presenting itself as a systemic party respecting the rules of the political game.

The insertion of Islamist rhetoric and symbols to the Turkish national identity and everyday politics partly became possible in the aftermath of the 1980 military coup, which originally served to weaken working-class movement and left-wing youth movements of the 1960s and 1970s. The political system established in the aftermath of the 1980 military coup secured the weakening of the working-class movements and left-wing political rhetoric in Turkey in a way that led to the rise of identity-based politics among pious Muslims, Islamists, Kurds, Alevis, Circassians, non-Muslim minorities, and other ethno-cultural communities. When the inclusion-moderation thesis is applied to test the behavioural and ideological transformation of the Turkish Islamists, especially in the aftermath of the 1980 military coup, when the former social-class parameters were replaced with identity parameters, it largely differs from the way it has been applied in the western context. This

is mainly because it has been primarily developed in relation to radical leftist parties which did not indulge in identity politics, and in relation to Catholic parties of European societies. In these societies, the moderation of these radical leftist parties and Catholic parties has resulted from a deep-rooted secularization process (Jaffrelot, 2013: 888). Hence, it becomes rather more difficult to test the inclusion-moderation thesis in those contexts, which have not politically resolved social class conflicts and secularization claims.

From Welfare Party to the Justice and Development Party: Exclusion-Moderation

Islamist parties in Turkey remained marginal political actors in the electoral process of the state throughout the 1970s, and 1980s as they were opposed to pluralism and fundamental freedoms (Tezcür, 2010b: 79). It was the Welfare Party, established in 1983, which gradually adopted policies more in line with broader public appeal after gaining representation in the Parliament in 1991. Based on the earlier experiences of its predecessor, National Salvation Party (1972-1980), the party reformed its economic program, promoting private investment and entrepreneurship; eased their stance on the Kurdish question; created a social justice program called 'Just Order' (*Adil Düzen*) using a rather socialist discourse; allowed women to take an active role within the party; and went beyond religious mobilisation (Gülalp, 1999). Their success in local governments such as in Istanbul has also given them strength to search for different sources of legitimacy other than religion. Since the early days of their rule in local administrations in the big cities such as Istanbul, Ankara and Bursa in the 1990s, they focused more on constituency services and on what Pahwa (2017) calls *pothole fixing* in relation to the rise of Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt.

In 1996, the Welfare Party formed a coalition government with the True Path Party (*Doğru Yol Partisi*, DYP), a centre right party. However, the coalition did not last long as the Constitutional Court declared the Welfare Party as "an existential threat to the Turkish Republic" (Tezcür, 2010b: 79). The closure of the Party took place in a global conjuncture characterized with the emergence of armed Islamic resistance groups like Hamas and Hezbollah throughout the region (Muasher, 2014: 43). Before the closure of the Welfare Party in January 1998, the Virtue Party had already been established in December 1997 to fill the void. However, the Virtue Party failed to secure a similar proportion of popularity, primarily because of the growing discontent of younger members with global aspirations who realised that ideologically driven platforms failed to garner strong public support, while also making their parties more subject to state repression (Tezcür, 2010b: 80). The Virtue Party was also banned in 2001 for the same reason: "an existential threat to the Turkish Republic". The exclusion of the Virtue Party from political system prompted the younger reformist cohort to create the Justice and Development Party with a clear set of centrist policies promoting "modern values of liberalism, human rights and market economy" (Tezcür, 2010b: 80). The leader of the new Party, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan rejected all kinds of affiliations with Necmettin Erbakan,

describing Islam to make his party's centrist positions "accessible and meaningful" to the crowds (Tezcür, 2010b: 80). This was a new ideological stance in the history of Islamist parties in Turkey. While Erbakan utilised Islam as a "holistic ideology" in ontological contrast with the West and as an end in itself, Erdoğan rather addressed Islam as a means to make the AKP a catch all party.

The emergence of the Welfare Party with an Islamic social base and political agenda posed a profound challenge to the state-centric, republican and secular regime in both political and cultural terms. The Welfare Party (WP) and the broader social network of the Islamist movement sought to respond to the inequalities of the global and neo-liberal system by transcending the state and mobilizing the marginalized and underprivileged social groups within an expanding Islamic civil society (*umma*) and the framing structure of identity politics. The WP tried to generate its electoral support from a broad Islamist social network both by supporting the socio-economic opportunity structures for the social integration of the Islamist forces into the growing neo-liberal economy and the competitive urban life and by channelling their interests and demands to national politics through political parties. Like the Islamist movements in other Middle Eastern countries, Islamist communities, Sufi orders (*tarikats*) and Islamic welfare associations provided a network for the marginalized classes in which they were provided with sources of social services including employment, religious and secular education, health services, food, clothing and coal supplies, which the nation-state failed to provide to a large extent thanks to the unmanaged transition to a neo-liberal economy (Hale and Özbudun, 2009: 16-18).

It should be noticed that the Islamist political mobilization appealed both to the winners and losers of the global and neo-liberal economy in the sense that the newly emerging Islamic bourgeoisie, which underwent a continuous integration into the neo-liberal system from the 1980s onwards, distributed to the poor the wealth raised from publishing houses, private media channels, university preparation courses, Islamic banks and financial institutions and holding companies (Hale and Özbudun, 2009: 13). Through its connections with these Islamist communities, the WP attracted the votes of the Islamic bourgeoisie, the upper middle class and the marginalized lower class, and stimulated political mobilization of the conservative and Islamist social forces, which dramatically challenged the republican and secular segments (Hale and Özbudun, 2009).

With respect to the unacceptability and intolerance of the dominant regime towards the Islamist forces, the military elite and the coalition government led by the WP in 1997 confronted some crises. The WP posed some challenges to the secular regime with its demands articulating Islamic values and purposes in political life involving the exercise of Islamic law, the segregation of sexes in social life, religious education and the headscarf issue. Analysing the demands of the WP for the incorporation of Islam into formal politics, it should be underlined that what the WP was seeking was the acquisition of state power and the formation of an Islamic social order from above

rather than mere toleration for the recognition of freedom of religion and conscience and the protection of religious rights such as the wearing of the headscarf and religious clothing in public places (Hale and Özbudun, 2009: 7-9).

Within the legal and institutional framework, the military/bureaucratic state elite made it explicit that the WP's Islamist demands could not be tolerated; the military gave a harsh ultimatum to the party in the meeting of the National Security Council (NSC) on February 28, 1997 and the party was closed down on January 16, 1998 by a Constitutional Court decision in the following year (Hale and Özbudun, 2009:4). The WP and the Islamist forces constituted a religious and cultural challenge to the republican and secular dominant regime and segments of the society. Their challenge was manifested in the legal and institutional frameworks in that the WP suggested the introduction of a new legal implementation, whereby each legal community would be governed in accordance with its own religious rules. In doing so, it asserted a return to the Medina Covenant of the Prophet Muhammad's time, the age of happiness (*asr-ı saadet*), wherein a kind of multiculturalism based on religious differences was experienced (Hale and Özbudun, 2009: 7-8).

As an everyday practice, in the social and economic spheres the WP also attempted to undermine the secular and Western order and to alter it in such a way that it could also embrace social forces which had a religious and Islamic way of life. Therefore, the WP and Islamist forces posed a religious and cultural diversity challenge both in their attempt to stimulate social integration and political participation of the Islamist segments into the republican and secular establishment and to Islamize the society and culture in the legal and institutional framework and everyday practices. However, the state elite and dominant secular segments reacted to this challenge of the WP immediately, and showed their intolerance towards the Islamist forces by purging them from the formal political sphere (Kaya, 2013).

AKP from Moderation to Islamism: A Conjunctural Opportunity

AKP came to power in the aftermath of 9/11 when many Islamist parties and governments in different parts of the world claimed to be the moderate role model for all the Islamist movements. Since 9/11, there have been several geopolitical developments involving the notion of moderation across the world. The Khatami administration in Iran started a global trend presenting itself as a moderate Islamist force and collaborated with the Bush administration in the move against the Taliban regime in Afghanistan. The subsequent establishment of the Karzai regime was described as having put Afghanistan on the path of moderation. In 2002, Pakistan's former military ruler, Gen Pervez Musharraf, joined the trend and coined the phrase 'enlightened moderation' in the struggle against religious extremism and radicalism. Similarly, Egypt's president Hosni Mubarak also followed the same logic of religious moderation as a means of justifying his authoritarian rule and to gain legitimacy in the international community. Many other Muslim countries such as Saudi

Arabia, Yemen, Pakistan, and Syria, which historically cultivated jihadist proxies as instruments to materialize their foreign policy objectives, also joined the ranks of Iran, Pakistan and Egypt in dealing with the blowback in terms of extremism and terrorism. Malaysia and Indonesia were also cited as examples of moderate Muslim polities in the 2000s (Kurlantsick, 2009; Bokhari, 2014; Ünver, 2013; Bokhari, 2014). Perhaps the most celebrated and promoted model of a "moderate" Muslim state has been Turkey for two major reasons: being a secular republic for many decades, and a fellow NATO member state (Ünver, 2013; and Yavuz, 2006). AKP leadership was also successful in appropriating the growing paradigm of "Alliance of Civilizations" versus the "Clash of Civilizations" in the United Nations. Furthermore, its multiculturalist trajectory was also very well aligning with the multiculturalist discursive fashion underlining inter-religious dialogue at global scale (Kaya, 2013).

The Justice and Development Party leadership has invested in a very strong civilizational discourse from the very first days of its establishment in 2001. AKP's use of a civilizational rhetoric based on religious and cultural undertones was also encouraged by the conjunctural developments such as the ascendancy of the Huntingtonian Clash of Civilizations paradigm since the mid-1990s. Resorting itself to the idea of Alliance of Civilizations as an antidote of the Clash of Civilizations paradigm, the AKP portrayed Turkey as a bridge connecting different civilizations. Instrumentalization of Turkey as a model for other Muslim countries in the Middle East and elsewhere was welcomed by the Bush administration in the USA as well as by some of the European leaders (Kaya, 2013). PM Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and several other politicians as well as academics played with this new role expecting that it would bring Turkey into a more favourable position in the European integration process. Turkey's role as a mediator between the Muslim world and the non-Muslim world was also accredited by the United Nations as the PM Erdoğan was appointed together with the Spanish PM José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero by the UN to launch the *Alliance of Civilizations* initiative.[3]

With the conjunctural winds behind, the AKP gained an absolute majority of parliamentary seats in the 2002, 2007, 2011 and 2015 general elections, as well as in the 2004, 2009 and 2014 local elections. It became the first party since 1987 to win the majority of seats in the Turkish parliament. Furthermore, it was only the third Islamist party ever to become a part of the government in modern Turkey since the coalition government established by Necmettin Erbakan's National Salvation Party (*Milli Selamet Partisi*) in 1973 with the Republican Peoples' Party (CHP), and then again Erbakan's Welfare Party between 1995 and 1997 with the True Path Party (DYP). Following the devastating financial-economic crisis in 2001, the AKP leadership, especially Recep

[3] For further information on the Initiative see the official website of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations, http://www.unaoc.org/ (accessed on 30 May 2017).

Tayyip Erdoğan, came across a very fertile land for their landslide victory in 2002. Turned into a hero in the eyes of the conservative segments of the Turkish society in 1998 after he was imprisoned for four months because of a religiously loaded poem invoking Muslims to resist the foreign invasion of Turkey, in 1997, Erdoğan had already attracted a great number of voters. One should also be reminded of the fact that subaltern, conservative and religious circles saw him as one of them, distanced from aristocracy, military, oppressive state, and the elitist Kemalist republicanism (Tuğal, 2009: 176). Due to his family background, the conservative neighbourhood he was raised in (Kasimpasa, a sub-urban district of Istanbul), his Islamic discourse in everyday life, his sermon-like public speech style, and the slang-like language that he used from time to time in Istanbul, and his Sunni-dominant rhetoric made him very appealing for a large population (Tuğal, 2009: Chapter 5). The lifestyle of the AKP leaders, especially PM Erdoğan, has always been appreciated by various groups of the subordinate people, as they have found it akin to their own lifestyles. Cihan Tuğal eloquently describes this symbolic capital of Erdoğan as an instrument contributing to the hegemony of the AKP:

"Although the leader of the AKP, Erdoğan, had openly shunned Islamism and adopted neoliberalism, his past involvement as an Islamist, his shared everyday practices with the poor, and his origins in an urban poor neighbourhood enabled popular sectors to read non-neoliberal meanings into the party. Although he was the mayor of Istanbul, Erdoğan broke his fast in slums or shanties together with the poor. Right after he was elected mayor, he had his hair cut in the poor neighbourhoods where he grew up. Erdoğan became even more popular after he spent time in jail due to an Islamist poem he had read at a rally before he had shunned Islamism. Hence, the symbolic capital circulated by the Islamist movement (piety, suffering for the religious cause, shared origin and practices with the people, etc.) the community. Universal welfare policies are no longer announced by the nation-states. was still deployed by the AKP... (Tuğal 2011, pp. 91–92).

Constituting the main cultural capital of the AKP elite, these common religious values have been instrumental in overcoming class differences between the AKP and their poor constituency. Appointing devout Muslims to ministries and the bureaucracy, the AKP aimed to create identification between the party and the nation (Kaya, 2015; Saraçoğlu, 2011: 44).

In addition to its land-slide victories in general elections, the party also won roughly between 40 and 45 percent of the vote in the 2004, 2009 and 2014 local elections. Taking over the *executive power* through the electoral process in 2002, the AKP managed to make a political and societal alliance with the EU, the Gülen movement, and liberals as well as with its own electorate against the military tutelage, which had banned its Islamist predecessors in the preceding years.

Similar to the Freedom and Justice Party in Egypt, in other words the Muslim Brotherhood, which formed political alliances with non-Islamist and liberal forces in post-Mubarak Egypt after the massive Tahrir Square protests in 2011 (Pahwa, 2017: 1072), the AKP was also successful in making alliances with anti-militaristic oppositional forces at local, national and international levels until the mid-2000s. However, the party was unable to consolidate its power by the presidential elections of 2007, ending the term of the distinctly secular President, Ahmet Necdet Sezer. The latter was an ally of the laicist army and had often refused to sign bills proposed by Parliament, where the AKP had enjoyed a majority since December 2002. President Sezer vetoed several AKP legislative proposals and openly warned the public against the threat of Islamisation (Bali 2013, p. 674). After taking over the *presidential power* assigned to Abdullah Gül, who was Erdoğan's companion in their progressive faction against Erbakan's conservative leadership in the Welfare Party originating from the National Outlook trajectory (Coşar, 2012).

After the presidential election in 2007, the AKP started to practice a majoritarian conception of democracy and an electoral authoritarianism of a more markedly Islamic character (Özbudun, 2014). The consolidation of the AKP's authoritarian rule was also made possible by its increasing electoral strength in both local and general elections in the years following the legal and political struggle against the military tutelage, which had succeeded in bringing different groups together in a great societal and political alliance. Following the Presidential Election of 2007, AKP encountered the obstructions of the Kemalist-militarist elite, who challenged the party leadership with lawsuits. The chief public prosecutor of the Supreme Court of Appeals filed a complaint against the AKP on 14 March 2008 and petitioned for the Constitutional Court to close the party down, arguing, "The party has become a focus of anti-secular activities." Yalçınkaya, the chief public prosecutor, requested a ban on 71 politicians from politics, including the Prime Minister Tayyip Erdoğan and the President Abdullah Gül. The Constitutional Court, which decided to take up the case against the AKP on 31March 2008, made its decision on the case on 30 July 2008, only about four-and-a-half months after the chief prosecutor applied to the top court for the closure of the AKP on March 14. Having the pressure from national and international community, the Constitutional Court felt the need to take immediate action to conclude the case. Constitutional Court rejected the chief prosecutor's demand to permanently shut down the ruling Islamist AKP and ban Prime Minister, President and 70 other leading AKP members from political office for a period of five years. The party escaped closure and having 71 of its leading figures banned from politics. However, the court did rule that the AKP had shown signs of being "a focal point for anti-secular activity" and recommended the party be deprived of fifty percent of the financial aid it received from the state treasury.[4] The closure case was perceived by both national and international

[4] See for further detail the webpage of the BBC available at http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/7533414.stm

community as a test case for Turkish democracy. The Court decision was a relief not only for Turkey but also for the European Union.

The AKP elite acted against the lawsuit aiming at the closure of the party. The staging of the *Ergenekon* and *Balyoz* (Sledgehammer) trials have been important judiciary instruments for the AKP to challenge the legitimacy of the military among the public (Seufert, 2014; Rubin, 2008). These trials were opened against a group of Kemalist military personnel, academics, journalists and businessmen. When the Chief Prosecutor filed the lawsuit in the Constitutional Court demanding the closure of the AKP in March 2008, the Prime Minister Erdogan immediately responded with a midnight roundup of new *Ergenekon* suspects. Whereas previous suspects arrested had been largely fringe figures, this time the net was widened to include some of the most prominent secular intellectuals in Turkey, such as Doğu Perinçek, leader of the Workers' Party, the editor-in-chief of *Cumhuriyet*, Ilhan Selcuk; and Kemal Alemdaroglu, a former president of Istanbul University. It appears that Erdogan also put the offending judges under surveillance. A scandal erupted in May 2008 when the vice-president of the Constitutional Court complained that he was being followed. Uniformed police responding to his complaint found that his pursuers were undercover officers (Jenkins, 2008). It was later found out that surveillance was a popular sport for the National Intelligence Service (MIT). This caused an uproar in Turkey revealing further allegations with regards to new suspects within the framework of the Ergenekon case file, which was made ready on 25 July 2008, immediately prior to the Constitutional Court decision regarding the closure of the AKP. Eventually, after a long process of filing, Turkish prosecutors issued a 2,455-page indictment detailing an alleged plot to overthrow Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan by an elaborate network of retired military officers, journalists, academics, businessmen, and other secular opponents of the ruling Justice and Development Party (Rubin, 2008). Although the precise facts of the case are not yet clear, the so-called *Ergenekon* conspiracy appears to be a largely fictionalized construct, with an ongoing investigation geared mainly to warding off *constitutional* challenges to the ruling party, not coups. However, the file had very serious claims concerning the killing of Hrant Dink, several murders whose perpetrators are unknown, nationalist and jingoist agitations which popped up from time to time, attempts to military coups, and cooperation with the PKK (Kurdish Workers Party) and radical Islamist Hezbollah leading to constant instability in the country, particularly in the Southeast Turkey. Police also uncovered documents that revealed plans for a sustained campaign of terror and intimidation against the Islamist government due to begin in early July 2008. A perfect storm of disruption was to be whipped up, beginning with a groundswell of popular protest, followed by a wave of assassinations and bombings, culminating in an economic crisis and army coup. Turkey's moderate Islamist government would be ousted in favour of a right-wing secular dictatorship. The documents appeared to identify a 30-member assassination squad

targeting judges and other prominent figures (Tait, 2008). As of today, it was understood that all these were a kind of set up staged by the Gülenist groups who were in alliance with the AKP leadership in those days, a point which will come shortly.

Hence, one could assume that moderation of the AKP was partly hardened by both international and domestic developments.[5] On the one hand, growing Euroscepticism and emerging political and economic opportunities in the Middle East, the Caucasus, the Balkans, Africa and the Central Asia have provoked the AKP leadership to become more Sunni Islamist and conservative at international level. On the other hand, the military establishment and its ally, the Judiciary, cornered and compelled the AKP to become more conservative and Islamist for consolidating the support of its electorate, who have been predominantly anti-military. These international and domestic factors constrained the ways in which the AKP leadership utilized various components included in their political and ideological repertoire, which mainly originate from the conventional dichotomy between laicism and religiosity as well as from the historic discourse of victimization. The end result of the de-moderation of the AKP is the Islamisation of the state and society in Turkey.

Exploitation of Persistent Ideological Divides

Revitalising the conventional divide between laicism and Islam, the AKP adopted the ideology of so-called 'conservative democracy' in the beginning of their office to address a wider spectrum of people across the Sunni majority, no matter whether they were ethnically Turkish, Kurdish, Laz, Circassian, or Arab, at the expense of Alevis and non-Muslims. After taking over both the executive and presidential power, the AKP started to penetrate the judiciary and bureaucracy by lowering the retirement age in order to place its adherents in key positions in security, higher education, and other key institutions such as the Turkish Radio Television Corporation (TRT), the Board of Higher Education (YÖK), High Audio Visual Board (RTÜK), Turkish Court of Accounts (*Sayistay*), Higher Board of Judges and Prosecutors (HSYK), Board of Information and Communication Technologies (TIK), Public Procurement Authority (KIK), Banking Regulation and Supervision Agency (BDDK), Capital Markets Board (SPK), and Housing Development Administration (TOKI), Turkish Academy of Sciences (TÜBA), and Technological Research Council of Turkey (TÜBİTAK), and Turkish Airlines (THY) and etc. (Kaya, 2015; Yeşilada and Rubin, 2011).

Another aspect of the AKP's subtle Islamisation is its political economy and monetary policies coupled with green capital, black money, a shadow economy, the creation of new billionaires, increasing trade links with the Gulf region, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the Russian

[5] For more discussion on the impact of international and domestic factors on the moderation or de-moderation of religious parties see Brocker and Künkler (2013).

Federation, and Iran (Kirişçi, 2011), economic growth, anti-inflation measures, neo-Ottoman and Islamic aesthetics of numerous shopping malls, gated communities, and furniture, new alcohol regulation, and the commodification of Islam as a marketing strategy incorporated into "Brand Turkey" through Turkish Airlines and "Ramadan in Istanbul".[6] For instance, the gradual shift in the emphasis made on the importance of the relations with the Muslim countries is evident in the two Election Declarations of 2002 and 2015, the first Declaration and the last one. In 2002 Declaration, there is a very short reference to the relations with the Islamic countries towards the very end of a-135-page document:

"Our Party is specially interested in developing stronger links with the Islamic countries. While building bilateral collaborations with these countries, we will also try our best to make sure that the Organization of Islam Conference will be more dynamic and respected in international community" (AKP, 2002a: 134).

While in 2001 Election Declaration the word "Islam" was only used twice, it was used three times in 2007, seven times in 2011, and 11 times in 2015. The emphasis on Islam gradually increased in the forthcoming years, and it was used not only in reference to foreign policy priorities, but also to the domestic policy issues such as the conflict resolution attempts with regards to the Alevi Question (AKP, 2015a: 21), to the Kurdish Question (Kaya, 2013), and to the idea of Turkey's being the leading-state of the Islamic civilization:

"We have stood up against all kinds of injustice, and Islamophobia. We have given our utmost support to the ones in need. This is why, Turkey's name has become extremely esteemed all around the world" (AKP, 2015a: 326-327).

The Election Declarations have also gradually become more tuned with a religious discourse. The same pattern could also be detected in the Government Programs of the AKP. The word "Islam" was used only once in the 58th Government Program (AKP, 2002b), three times in the 59th Government Program (AKP, 2003b), none in the 60th Government Program (AKP, 2007b), four times in the 61st Government Program (AKP, 2011b), nine times in the 62nd Government Program

[6] For more information on the main tenets of the "Brand Turkey" equipped with Islamic and neo-Ottoman characteristics, see European Union Communication Strategy prepared by the Secretariat General for European Union Affairs in Ankara in 2010 (http://www.abgs.gov.tr/abis/?l=2). Similarly, 2023 Vision of the AKP (http://www.akparti.org.tr/english), newly established Yunus Emre Institutes (http://yee.org.tr), and Ramadan in Istanbul (http://istanbuldaramazan.org) display Islamic and neo-Ottoman undertones in their content and coverage (Kaya and Tecmen, 2012).

(2014b), six times in the 64th Government Program (AKP, 2015b), and finally six times in the 65th Government Program (AKP, 2016).[7]

In the meantime, the AKP's actions were concurrent with an increasing number of private Islamic initiatives: Islamic clothing and swimsuits are gaining a salient public visibility mainly through women's headscarves, and subscriptions to religious publications have tripled in recent years (Pupcenoks 2012: 285; Çınar, 2005). Neoliberal monetary and economic policies as well as political and societal transformation instigated by the AKP were widely represented by the Turkish media. Party control of the latter was achieved either through Islamising the content of the public TV channels operating under the Turkish Radio Television Corporation (TRT), putting pressure on critical media by means of auditing mechanisms (for instance the Doğan Holding, Daily *Cumhuriyet*, Daily *Sözcü*, and Daily *Birgün*, and IMC TV), ensuring that partisan entrepreneurs took over a number of newspapers and television channels (*Daily Sabah*, *Daily Yeni Safak, ATV*, etc.), or through the dailies and television channels of the Gülen movement (*Daily Zaman, Samanyolu* TV). The ways in which the AKP has manufactured consent have not been limited to the ideological venues of popular culture: scientific journals have also been published to disseminate the ideas and perspectives of the party (*Perceptions, Insight Turkey*, etc.). This process of manufacturing consent has been coupled with the formation of professional Islamic intellectuals in the Gramscian sense, who have dominated the public space by means of press and media since the 2007 elections, when the AKP consolidated its political power (Freedom House, 2014).

The literature on inclusion-moderation thesis asserts that radical parties may not necessarily become more moderate ideologically, but may adjust their behaviour in accordance with institutional and structural incentives (Kalyvas, 2000). This is also true for the AKP. In the first five years of their office, the AKP leadership was successful to go through a behavioural moderation by adopting themselves to the needs of the public at local, national and international levels. Although, there was also an attempt to introduce an ideological moderation by means of the discourse of conservative democracy, it has not continued further. The inclusion-moderation thesis seems to be successful in explaining the ways in which the AKP has moderated itself to enjoy emerging political opportunities and to increase its public support, however it fails to understand the AKP's ideological drives in power to transform the political and societal structure, especially after 2007 (Gürses, 2014).

Alignment and Dealignment with Gülen Movement

[7] While the 58th Government was presided by Abdullah Gül, the 59th, the 60th, the 61st by Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, the 62nd, the 63rd, the 64th by Ahmet Davutoğlu, and the 65th was presided by Binali Yıldırım. As the 63rd Government was a transitionary government between 7 June 2015 Elections and 7 November 2015 Elections, the AKP did not prepare a Government Program.

Alignment with the Gülen movement deserves to be scrutinized in more detail. However due to the lack of space, this article will briefly touch upon the political and societal alliance between the AKP and the Gülen movement. Since his exile to the United States in 1999 when his schools in and abroad were taken over by the Turkish Ministry of National Education, Fethullah Gülen has been in favour of the idea that the State should be transformed by an Islamist party to make Islam the dominating societal force. Gülen also emphasised that it would be essential to train an elite with the intellectual capacity to govern the State and survive against the Western hegemony. He was also a firm believer of the idea that a transition of power could only be achieved with a popular support in elections, which could only be acquired through rightfully responding to their claims and expectations. Until their alliance with the AKP, the Gülen movement did not chose to participate in the popular debates regarding the Islamization of the Turkish society, the headscarf issue, and the *Imam Hatip* Schools (Clerics Schools) for the training of preachers (Yeşilada and Rubin, 2011). Their absence in these debates brought about the result that secular circles ceased to regard the Gülen movement as a threat to their Europeanised lifestyles until the late 1990s (Seufert, 2014).

Gülen's convictions were also largely consistent with the Turkish state's cultural and educational policies implemented in the aftermath of the 1980 military *coup d'état*. Over the course of time, aligning themselves with the state ideology, the Gülen supporters represented a combination of national-religious sentiments and socio-moral conservatism, and were committed to the creation of a strong state, while simultaneously opposing the organisation of political Islam. Mushrooming of the Gülen schools inside and outside Turkey (*Hizmet* Schools), establishing various foundation universities in different parts of the country, founding several different civil society organisations and business associations, such as the Foundation of Journalists and Writers (*Gazeteciler ve Yazarlar Vakfi*) and the Turkish Confederation of Businessmen and Industrialists (TUSKON), organising Turkish Language Olympics, launching charity-support networks, training its own professional intellectuals, aligning with the AKP, and integrating itself into various ministerial and bureaucratic ranks of the state, the Gülen movement has in a way developed a kind of statist stance (Seufert, 2014).

The alliance lasted until the AKP decided to align with the Kurds within the framework of so-called "Peace Process" (Seufert, 2014: 19; Özbudun, 2014: 6). Kurdish-Turkish peace process started in 2013 as process aiming at resolving the conflict between the Kurds and the Turkish state, which is continuing since 1984, and has so far resulted in more than 40,000 mortal casualties and great economic losses for Turkey. There was a unilateral cease-fire between 1999 and 2004, which did not last longer during the heydays of the EU-Turkey relations. The latest cease-fire was mutually declared in 2013, and it lasted until September 2014 due to the spill over effect of the

Syrian civil war and the AKP's reluctance to help the Kurds in Kobane, which was under the siege of Islamic State forces.[8]

The Gezi movement, spontaneously organised in Istanbul in June 2013 by different societal groups in opposition to former Prime Minister Erdoğan's condescending Islamist and conservative discourse, was the last straw for the Gülenists. Disapproving of the brutal actions of the Turkish police against the demonstrators, the movement terminated its alliance with the AKP, and tried to present itself as a democratic and liberal movement. Probably, the most conspicuous event of the end of the alliance came with the famous prosecution of several AKP government ministers, their children and others on 17 December 2013 (Özel, 2014; Özbudun, 2014). Turkish police arrested the sons of three cabinet ministers and at least 34 others in orchestrated raids that appeared to represent the biggest assault on the authority of the former prime minister, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, since mass protests against his rule in the summer of 2013. Later, Erdoğan and his AKP government managed to portray the detentions as a civilian coup organized by the Gülen movement against his power. Following the termination of the alliance, the two groups have become engaged in an intense clash in order to sustain their power in different ranks of the state, ranging from the judiciary to the security forces, causing tremendous political turmoil across the country (Özbudun, 2014). The final stage of this collateral rivalry was the failed military coup, which was claimed to be initiated by the dissident Gülenist elements of the army on 15 July 2016.

AKP's Neo-Conservatism as an attempt to Ideological Moderation?: Islamization of Politics and Society in Turkey

Gunther and Diamond (2003) differentiate religious parties into those that are 'denominational' and those that are 'fundamentalist' or 'proto-hegemonic'. The former is both democratic and mass-based, such as the Christian Democratic Parties in Europe. The latter is non-democratic, hierarchical, and even absolutist such as the Islamic Salvation Front in Algeria, and the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt (Brocker and Künkler, 2013). One could argue that AKP has displayed both faces since its establishment. Founded during the process of deepening European integration of Turkey in the early 2000s, AKP started as a denominational party and emphasized its "conservative democratic" nature in parallel to the "conservative democratic" parties of the European Union countries. However, their attempt to prove their "conservative democratic" nature in a dialogical manner with the Christian Democrats in Europe has gradually become less important and even irrelevant along with the growth of Euroscepticism in Turkey in the aftermath of the biggest European enlargement of 2004. As will be explained in detail, the AKP has become more "proto-hegemonic" and authoritarian since 2007 Presidential Elections which resulted with the victory of Abdullah Gül as opposed to the hardcore Kemalists.

[8] About the Kurdish Peace Process see Stein (2014).

Since its inception, the AKP adopted a "conservative democratic" ideology with an emphasis on secularism, social peace, social justice, the preservation of moral values and norms, pluralism, democracy, free market economy, civil society and good governance (Çınar and Duran, 2008: 31; Bilge-Criss, 2011). By using such a pragmatist discourse, the AKP aimed to mobilize the socially and economically marginalized classes who had reacted to the inequalities deriving from the processes of modernization, globalization and urban life (Yeğenoğlu, 2011).[9] Moreover, the AKP also became attractive to the liberal and secular bourgeoisie and the upper-middle and middle classes, who were disenchanted with the political system because of the political and economic instability (Hale and Özbudun, 2009: 37). The AKP immediately took the initiative to increase toleration and respect for the freedom of religion and conscience, and for the protection of religious rights such as the right to practice religion in public and private space (AKP, 2004). This kind of conservative multiculturalism celebrating cultural differences and local values has been complemented by an acceptance of the inevitability of political and economic reforms demanded by the processes of globalization and informed by universal values such as democracy, human rights, rule of law, protection of minorities and the free market (Houston, 2006: 166). In the meantime, global conjuncture in the aftermath of 9/11, which was characterized with multiculturalist and civilizational rhetoric, has also made it easier for the AKP to have international recognition through its moderate Islamist discourse.

The appeal of the AKP to the Turkish public also relies on the political discourse of the party underlining so-called "conservative democracy" (*Muhafazakâr Demokrasi*), which was introduced by the AKP elite as a written text in 2004 with a foreword by Tayyip Erdoğan. Academically speaking, the text was weak. However, it displayed very well the priorities of the AKP in the first period of its power. It starts with the critique of the former regime with the following adjectives: despotic (*buyurgan*), oppressive (*baskıcı*), forced (*dayatmacı*), homogenizing (*tektipçi*), proclamation from above (*tepeden inmeci*), and social engineering (*toplum mühendisligi*). All these adjectives were references to the fact that the Kemalist project of modernization was a form of top-down *simple modernization,* as Anthony Giddens (1994) would put it (AKP, 2004).[10] In response to that, "New Conservatism" or "Conservative Democracy" was not meant to be preservation of culture, tradition or religion as such, but conservatism was phrased as a form of 'negative philosophy' directed against both the radicalness and elitism of political projects of social engineering. Defining democracy as a regime characterized by dialogue, forbearance and tolerance (*tahammül*), it was clearly stated in the text that the AKP was destined to limit the power of the

[9] Oliver Roy (2006) suggests that the return to religiosity has been a widespread phenomenon in various parts of the world resulting from the detrimental effects of the processes of globalization.
[10] For further information on Akdoğan's conception of "conservative democracy" see Akdoğan (2004). For a critical analysis of the AKP's conservative democracy see Şimşek (2013).

political sphere in order to safeguard against 'arbitrary and oppressive regimes' (AKP, 2004: 26). What is remarkable here is the fact that there was a very strong emphasis on "conservative democracy" in the 2002 Election Declaration (AKP, 2002a). However, the Election Declarations of the General Elections in 2007, 2011, and 2015 as well as of the Local Elections in 2014 did not have any reference to that (AKP, 2007a; AKP, 2011a, AKP, 2014a, and AKP, 2015a).

AKP's early position on Kemalism, laicism and democracy is also worth mentioning with reference to the text on conservative democracy, because it reveals what the AKP actually means by the term 'minorities'. The text denounces the Kemalist form of laicism as it is claimed to be a Jacobin, totalitarian or monolithic ideology bringing about conflict rather than social cohesion (AKP, 2004: 94). The document is also very strongly in favour of minority rights. The text underlines that democracy's success can be assessed not by majority rule, but according to whether minorities are self-determining or not (AKP, 2004: 77). Evidence shows that what is meant by minorities is certainly not ethnic minorities (Kurds, Circassians, Arabs), or non-Sunni minorities (Alevis, Bektashis, Bahais). On the contrary, the term minority simply has religious connotations. Put differently, non-Muslim groups are considered to be minorities, who need benevolent tolerance of the ruling majority, which is Sunni Islam. The text also claims that the dynamic of Kemalist domination derives from its ability to close down political parties and charge individuals in the Constitutional Court on the basis of their acts and published and spoken words. However, it seems that the later AKP contradicted its earlier convictions, as it has become more and more engaged in controlling the judiciary, military and civilian bureaucracy in an illiberal way that replicates the Kemalist form of governmentality, which was heavily criticized by the party in its earlier days.

Whether the AKP's discourse on conservative democracy and Islamic liberalism achieved the transformation of the society into a more tolerant society with respect to the recognition of religious freedom and rights is not certain. However, it is clear that the AKP government made profound attempts to force the state and the society to recognize cultural and religious differences. The protection of religious freedoms and rights became a heated debate between the Islamist and secular segments of society. One of the cases, where the AKP sought to increase tolerance *vis-à-vis* the social integration of Islamist forces and to foster the respect for religious freedom is that the AKP government proposed a draft-law, which enabled *Imam Hatip* (clerics) graduates to study not only in the faculty of Islamic theology, but also in other faculties, a point I shall come back shortly (Hale and Özbudun, 2009: 86). By doing so, it tried to eradicate the constraints that had given rise to the social and economic segregation of religious and conservative segments.

Moreover, between 2002 and 2008 the AKP made several attempts to initiate amendments and decisions in the legal and institutional framework for the lift of the ban on the headscarf (Kaya, 2013; Bali, 2013: 680). The AKP government proposed to the Constitutional Court an amendment

to the articles of the Constitution concerning the ban on wearing the headscarf in universities with the expectation that this amendment would lead to the lift of the ban in 2008. Following the constitutional amendments, the newly elected head of the Board of the Higher Education, Yusuf Ziya Özcan, made an announcement to the universities and stated that according to the constitutional change, the ban on wearing a headscarf in the Turkish universities was lifted. Today, the ban is lifted in all the public institutions including the judiciary, army and police.

AKP government generated a set of strategies, discourses, tools, and policies to transform society and politics in Turkey (Kaya, 2015). Coming to power as a moderate Islamist party, it has gradually Islamized the state and society. The Islamization process became rather more explicit in the aftermath of the transfer of the presidential power from secularist Ahmet Necdet Sezer to Islamist Abdullah Gül. AKP was initially successful in establishing political alliances with liberal, conservative, and Islamist forces, as well as with the EU and the US, in consolidating its power in a time characterized with the growing popularity of civilizational rhetoric. The AKP leadership was also effective in consolidating its power by means of generating various discourses such as neo-conservatism, neo-liberalism, Islamism, and victimisation (Kaya, 2015; White, 2013; Ertugrul, 2012). In addition to the strategies and discourses utilised by the AKP, society and politics were also Islamised by means of neo-liberal social provisioning policies, partly delegating welfare provisions to faith-based voluntary associations, underlining the importance of a three-generational family structure, and encouraging charitable work (Kaya, 2015; Duben, 2013; Yazıcı, 2012; Buğra and Candaş 2011; Eder, 2010; Buğra and Keyder, 2006). AKP also put a strong emphasis on family, faith-based organisations, and charitable work as a remedy of the neoliberal state to supplement formal welfare provisions. AKP's social reforms have mainly focused on unsuccessful attempts to criminalise adultery, and its more successful attempts to lift the headscarf ban, to reinforce familial values, to revitalise conservative values, and to Islamise public space through debates on building mosques, converting some churches to mosques, separating male and female student dormitories and private student housing, and helping the poor on the basis of Islamic references, but not through a rights-based approach (Kaya, 2015).

Hence, it is feasible to argue that AKP went through both behavioural and ideological moderation in the first few years of their power until 2007. However, when Abdullah Gül took over the Presidential power in 2007 elections, both the executive power and the legislative power were, in a way, monopolized by the AKP, and prepared the ground to make the necessary legal changes to also control the judiciary power. Both domestic and international developments including the cost of accession negotiations with the EU, growing Turkophobia and Islamophobia in the EU, and Turkey's drive to be a soft power in the region have made the AKP become more confident in fully

controlling the state with an authoritarian, Islamist and populist disposition, which eventually led to the accumulation of a growing social unrest.

Islamic Populist Style as a Form of Governmentality

AKP's reversion to Islamism goes in parallel with a populist form of governmentality. The term "governmentality" was used by Michel Foucault (1979) to refer to the practices which characterise the form of supervision a state exercises over its subjects, their wealth, misfortunes, customs, bodies, souls and habits. Michel Foucault describes the concept of *governmentality* as a collection of methods used by political power to maintain its authority, or as an art of acquiring power. The AKP has so far used different technics of governmentality such as Europeanization democratization, multiculturalism, toleration, polarization, Islamization, authoritarianization and populism. In what follows, AKP's turn towards Islamism will be delineated as the failure of the moderation process and as the development of a new form of governmentality, i.e. Islamic populism. As explained earlier, Islamisation of the Turkish state, thus reversion of the AKP to illiberal politics has started in 2007 when the presidential power was taken from the Kemalist forces in power. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's grip on power was made even more obvious in the 2011 Election Declaration with the introduction of "progressive democracy" (*ileri demokrasi*), which mainly essentialized the "national will" (*milli irade*) prioritizing the expectations of the "people" with regards to direct democracy and undermining the power of the institutions and the separation of powers (AKP, 2011a). Islamization of the state and society by means of different strategies, discourses and policies was partly softened by the continuous emphasis of the AKP on the quest for a civilian constitution in 2011 and 2015 Election Declarations to earn more popular support (AKP, 2011; AKP, 2015a). Both Election Declarations written in 2011 and 2015 were also addressing at the Vision 2023 (*2023 Vizyonu*) to aim at the completion of the transformation of the New Turkey in the centenary of the Turkish Republic established in 1923 (AKP, 2011a; AKP, 2015a). Islamisation of the state actors, bureaucracy, education, public space, and the army has continued until the Gezi movement in June 2013, a movement which brought all the oppositional forces together against the illiberal, authoritarian, Islamist and sectarian politics of the AKP (Kaya and Bee, 2017; Özel 2014; Özbudun 2014). Traumatic experience of Gezi movement coupled with the corruption allegations of the Gülenist media against Erdoğan's family and the AKP ministers were the two main reasons behind the employment of populist style as a form of governmentality. This was also perhaps the time when the institutional character of the AKP started to become weakened along with the charismatic and Islamic populist political style of Erdoğan becoming more decisive in terms of the Islamist ideology starting to prevail over the former Kemalist ideology.

During the *Occupy Gezi* movement, the PM Erdoğan named the protesters as 'a bunch of scum', "*çapulcu*" in Turkish, which was immediately turned into a popular symbol of societal and political resistance. The word *çapulcu* was later popularized through the social media, and vernacularized by several international youth groups in different languages: "we are chappuling", "wir chappulieren" etc. The AKP and particularly Erdoğan himself belittled a handful of environmentalist protestors who were staying in tents at Gezi Park to protest the Istanbul Greater Municipality and the AKP, who were keen on building a shopping-mall replacing the Park. Towards the morning of the 28th of May, the police forces put the tents into fire and brutally attacked the environmentalists who were accompanied by their children and spouses. The brutal act of the police immediately provoked thousands of individuals who went to the Park to express their solidarity with their environmentalist peers. These crowds were later joined by thousands of middle-class youngsters who were angry enough because of the new alcohol regulation put forward by the AKP government. Apparently, what was happening was a kind of enlarging societal and political alliance, which was later extended even further with the inclusion of Alevi youngsters who were complaining about the naming of the third bridge connecting Europe with Asia, after one of the notorious Sultans of the Ottoman Empire in the 16th Century, Yavuz Sultan Selim Bridge, who is believed by the Alevis to have massacred thousands of Alevis on his march towards the Safavid Empire in Persia. Later, football fans of the teams, Fenerbahçe and Beşiktaş, as well as the supporters of the oppositional parties such as the CHP (Republican Peoples Party), MHP (Nationalist Action Party), BDP (Peace and Democracy Party) and others, joined them enlarging the alliance. Socialist Muslims, LGBT groups, Kemalists, labour unions, and some other marginal left-wing groups came to the centre of the city to express their solidarity with the rest of the allied societal forces, and to protest the hegemonic-authoritarian rule of the AKP in general, and the PM Erdoğan (Kaya and Bee, 2017; Özel, 2014; Özbudun, 2014).

PM Erdoğan and his friends were literally shocked with what was going on. The revolt was spreading around the country by means of the social media as the mainstream media was almost entirely controlled and pressured by the government. The protests were immediately replicated in several other cities such as Ankara, Izmir, Hatay, Eskisehir, Antalya, Tunceli etc. Most of the city centres in Turkey were literally occupied by the protestors, who were mainly complaining about the polarization of the society by the AKP rule on the religious-secularist faultline. One of the first things that the PM Erdoğan wanted to do was to organize a public rally in the centre of one of the big cities, Istanbul or Ankara. However, the protesters did not let him use the centre. He had to organize his rally in the outskirts of Ankara, where he collected thousands of supporters who were immediately appealed by Erdoğan's populist rhetoric polarizing the society even further between Muslims and secularists.

Following the Occupy Gezi Movement, towards the end of 2013 came serious allegations about the corrupt activities of some ministers and their children as well as of the Prime Minister Erdoğan and his immediate family members, known as the 17th of December Process. This was also the time when the holy alliance between the AKP and the Gülen movement was completely terminated, leading to a continuing war of secret tape recordings allegedly revealed by the latter to put the former under pressure for making concessions in the power struggle. The last part of the conflict between the President Erdoğan and the Gülen movement was staged on 15 July 2016 with the performance of a failed military coup, which was claimed by the former to be initiated by the latter. Following the 17th December 2013 corruption incidence, the AKP government made a complaint to the judiciary regarding the dissemination of secret tape recordings through the social media resulting with the official ban on the social media, Twitter and YouTube.[11] Eventually came the local elections on 30 March 2014, which was presented by the AKP political elite as well as by the oppositional parties regarding the rule of PM Erdoğan. The land-slide victory of the AKP with 45 percent vote is open to discussion. We need more scientific research to understand if the primary motive of the AKP electorate was to white-wash the PM and his dependants against the allegations of corruption, or to express their support to the profit-based local politics of the party. Probably, the reality is somewhere in between, that is to say that the attraction of the AKP for some springs from their *faith-based* approach towards the PM Erdoğan; and for some others what primarily matters is the *profit-based* local politics of the AKP leading to the continuation of the process of capital accumulation dating pack to the early days of the AKP rule. These two approaches have been repeatedly performed in the following elections (7 June 2015 and 1 November 2015) and the constitutional referendum (16 April 2017) held in the aftermath of the 15 July 2016 failed military coup to introduce the transformation of parliamentary democracy to presidential system.

Erdoğan's populist style is not very different from other populist figures such as Vladimir Putin, Marine Le Pen, Donald Trump, Gert Wilders or Viktor Orban. Moffit (2016: 29) classifies three main features of populist political style in today's world: a) *appeal to the people versus to the elite*; b) *ordinary and extraordinary manners*; and c) *investing in crisis, breakdown or threat*. Populism is not a fully-fledged ideology, it is rather a thin-cantered ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, the 'pure people' and the 'corrupt elite' (Mudde, 2007). It is "thin-centred", probably because it is not yet as thick as Communism, Socialism, Feminism, Ecologism, and/or Islamism to be a fully-fledged ideology.

[11] For one of the interventions of Erdoğan on Twitter see See *Daily Radikal*, "Başbakan Erdoğan: Twitter denen bir bela var," (PM Erdoğan: There is a trouble called Twitter), 2 June 2013. Available at http://www.radikal.com.tr/politika/basbakan_erdogan_twitter_denen_bir_bela_var-1135952 accessed on 15 May 2017. In his speech at the Kazlıçeşme rally in Istanbul on 16 June 2013, PM Erdoğan said: "We know very well who sent the 30.000 footsoldiers to Taksim square. Those who collude with terrorism in their own hotels, we know very well those, those who host them. Won't they be called to account? If we don't do this, the people will call us to account for it." Full speech available at http://www.akparti.org.tr/site/haberler/biz-yuzde-yuzun-hukumetiyiz/46043 accessed on 15 May 2017.

This Manichean understanding of the world which is based on a Cartesian duality between "pure people" and the "corrupt elite, or between "good" and "evil", or "believers" and "infidels", or the "majority" and the minority", or "friends" and "foes", appeals to the overall population, regardless of social class distinctions and political affiliations and is marked by deep suspicion of politicians, the powerful and the wealthy in society. Erdoğan's public statement during the Gezi movement came out with such a populist and polarizing tone to threaten the protestors on 27 May 2013:

"Don't tell me that all of society [is supporting the protests], I will not believe it… There might be extensions of ideological structures [behind the protests]. This might have gotten them to revolt. You have to see that. What haven't we done in this country that [led the protesters to] take such a step? There is 50 percent of [the country who voted for the ruling Justice and Development Party - AKP], and we can barely keep them at home [and prevent them from coming onto the streets for counter-protests]. But we have called on them to calm down."[12]

Similar to the appeal they have to "the people", which is actually an ambiguous category to the outsiders, populist leaders often have another similarity: "ordinary and extraordinary manners". Moffitt (2016) rightfully reminds us that slang, swearing, political incorrectness, being overly demonstrative and colourful as opposed to being rigid, rational, technocratic, intellectual, and politically correct, are often what the populist politicians prefer to use in public. The rationale here is to present themselves to the people as if they are just one of them and so close to the values, codes, norms and priorities of the people – a proximity the other elitist politicians could never have with the people. Populist leaders tend to use the right language, dialect, accent, mimics, body language, gestures, and ways of dressing in accordance with the environment they are in. All these choices are often culturally specific, and have great political and cultural resonance (Ostiguy, 2009). For example, President Erdoğan's marching down dusty streets, graveyards, or the poor neighbourhoods in the country in his popular prestogal jacket without a tie is a way of showing his appeal to the people.[13] These kinds of performative acts that populist politicians undertake are staged to show a kind of "ordinariness" to the people. But this does not mean that populist leaders only stage such performative acts of "ordinariness", they also stage alternative performances to invoke their followers that they are also extraordinary leaders with some merits such as proving their virility, masculinity for male leaders, and femininity and maternalism for female leaders (Moffitt, 2016: 66). Silvio Berlusconi's popular stories with women, Erdoğan's nick name "*Uzun*

[12] See Hurriyet Daily News, 27 May 2017, http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkish-pm-gets-into-row-with-reuters-reporter-over-taksim-protests.aspx?pageID=238&nID=48101&NewsCatID=338 accessed on 27 May 2017.
[13] See "Erdoğan 'makes his own fashion,' Turkey's semi-official agency says," http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/erdogan-makes-his-own-fashion-turkeys-semi-official-agency-says.aspx?pageID=238&nID=76826&NewsCatID=338

Adam" (tall man), and Vladimir Putin's tabloid pictures showing his topless body while hunting animals are some of those examples. Sometimes, the performative acts of extraordinariness might have some religious connotations. Hugo Chavez presented himself as the reincarnation of Simon Bolivar; Berlusconi once declared himself as the Jesus Christ of politics (Moffitt, 2016: 63); George Bush once presented himself as the Messiah (Singer, 2004); and Erdoğan announced himself as the shepherd[14]. Populist leaders have another commonality showing their unordinariness to the people, i.e., their constant endeavour against the enemies in the name of the people they represent. Based on a constant state of paranoia, they have a strong tendency that they will be killed by their enemies. Chavez's obsession was that he was going to be poisoned by the Colombian oligarchy (Halvorssen, 2010). Similar to the ways in which other populist leaders often act with the experience of death, one of Erdoğan's repeated sentences in his public speeches is as follows: "I started this march by wearing a shroud."[15] The threat or fantasy of death via the hands of the enemy is a common trope among populist leaders (Kelsey, 2016: 978-979).

The third common feature of populism is that it receives its impetus from the perception of crisis, breakdown, or threat originating from an outsider or insider element, or from an outside enemy, or from an enemy within (Taggart, 2000; Moffitt, 2016). Be it the global financial crisis, the refugee crisis, migration crisis, fundamentalist Islam crisis, Minaret crisis, headscarf crisis, Burkini crisis, any sort of military threat, or many other crises are often being articulated and rearticulated by populist politicians for their own vested interest to keep the people on alert so that it could be much easier to communicate with their constituents through at least one of these radically simplified terms and terrains of political debate. It is not a surprise then for the populist politicians to constantly invest in crises since they simply live on them. In Latin America, sometimes populist politicians refer to imperialist conspiracies; in the Netherlands Geert Wilders often exploits the increasing Islamisation of the Netherlands as an imminent threat to social, economic and political well-being of the nation. In Erdoğan's Turkey, sometimes the threat is the Gülen movement, sometimes it is the EU, or the USA, or "the interest lobby" (*faiz lobisi*). Populist leaders tend to upkeep the popular support by constantly dramatizing and scandalizing existing problems, or even the fabricated problems, crisis, breakdowns, or threats (Wodak, 2015; Albertazzi, 2007). Dramatization and scandalization imply a set of multiple references to the populist leaders, who construct themselves as knowledgeable, saviours, problem solvers and crisis managers that may lead their constituents to have more confidence in the efficacy of the populist political style (Wodak, 2015: 11).

[14] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZVVJS5FaQWc accessed on 10 May 2017.
[15] See "Erdoğan challenges Turkey's most popular whistle-blower," *Hurriyet Daily News*, 21 February 2015, http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/erdogan-challenges-turkeys-most-wanted-whistleblower-.aspx?pageID=238&nID=78651&NewsCatID=338

Islamic populism of the AKP leadership as a form of governmentality did partly lead to the potential and escalation of social unrest in Turkey, which eventually caused the eruption of the Gezi movement across the whole country, even the Turkish diaspora. Inclusion-moderation theory assumes that successive electoral thresholds would push movements to become institutionally specialized and compartmentalized with a gradually dominant political cadre pushing for further change (Pahwa, 2017: 1080). Yet what happened in the AKP was, in a way, similar to what happened to the Freedom and Justice Party established by the Muslim Brotherhood following the Tahrir Square movement in 2011. Occupy Gezi movement has reinforced an "organization-first" mindset in the AKP following Erdoğan's increasing grip on power. Erdoğan's success in absorbing electoral politics into its core religious mission both allowed it to engage in in politics without serious internal dissent, except the Gülenist circles, and prevented it from making key trade-offs that would facilitate further adaptation and moderation.

Conclusion

This article concludes that exclusion of the Islamist parties in Turkey by laicist, secularist, Kemalist and military elite has forced them to moderate their behaviour and ideology to become democratic players in formal political life of the country. Hence, the 'exclusion-moderation' thesis seems to be more explanatory rather than the 'inclusion-moderation' thesis. It seems that the main shortcoming of the latter is that it cannot explain the behavioural and ideological inclinations of Islamist parties once in power. Hence, the article finds that the AKP has strived to transform the Turkish state with an Islamist ideology in a revanchist manner against the Kemalist, secularist, laicist and Europeanist elite. The rise of the AKP is explicable through domestic political, economic and social conditions of the early 2000s constrained by financial crisis, social-economic deprivation of the subaltern groups in big cities as well as in Anatolia, long-lasting Kurdish question, Islamist revivalism, military legacy, globalization and European integration. In addition to the domestic constraints, global constraints such as 9/11, growing culturalist and civilizational rhetoric, discourse of inter-religious dialogue, and the search for a moderate Islamic role model at global scale, were also influential in the rise of the AKP's power.

The military had enormous leverage over governments and had veto power in issues including state regulation of Islam, Kurdish Question and Alevi Question. The Constitutional Court banned Islamic parties in 1998 and 2001. As Tezcür (2010a; and 2010b) argued that moderation is not always good under such authoritarian regimes, which are constantly subject to military interventions. While the AKP occasionally challenged the guardians' interference in politics, they generally preferred non-confrontational policies that accommodated the priorities of the guardians, and waited for the right moment, context and form of political alliance of various local, national and

international forces to weaken them so that they could declare their own absolute power. In this sense, moderation may result in religious parties becoming domesticated and developing authoritarian tendencies as the AKP did after 2007.

International factors such as the geopolitical context and international developments played an important role here. As Brocker and Künkler (2013: 181) rightfully underlined the dependence on international powers for legitimacy purposes may play an important role on the moderation of religious parties. The dependence of the AKP on the member states of the European Union and the civilizational paradigm of the US, which would cut off their support if radical parties came to power, contributed to their moderation that resulted with the split from their mother organization (*Milli Görüş*, National Outlook Movement). However, international pressure may also prevent moderation when it appears to be a sell-out of national interests to a foreign power (Brocker and Künkler, 2013: 181). In this regard, it is not a coincidence that AKP's drift from moderation has gone in parallel with the growing stream of Euroscepticism, which erupted in the mid-2000s following the European Enlargement wave of 2004.

It was found that there are two important turning points that made the AKP to revert to an Islamist, illiberal and authoritarian political actor. AKP started to transform the state through its Islamist behaviour and ideology in 2007 when the presidential office was taken over by Abdullah Gül, who was one of the founders of the Party. The state bureaucracy was radically transformed since then by installing Islamist figures in the key managerial positions. The second turning point is 2013 Gezi movement and the corruption allegations towards Erdoğan's family and AKP ministers in December 2013. Following these two events, which ontologically challenged Erdoğan and his power, PM Erdoğan became rather more authoritarian with his explicit rhetoric on the production of a more conservative and Islamist society, the traces of which were visible in the 2015 Election Declaration focusing on the construction of a "New Turkey" under the Presidential System (AKP, 2015a). Erdoğan's election as the president in 2014 paved the way for him to prepare the ground for the transformation of the parliamentary democratic system to the presidential system. However, the former ally, Gülen movement, created a few more obstructions to challenge his growing monopoly on power such as the failed military coup on 15 July 2016. Somehow, using the public resources, Erdoğan and the AKP managed to become victorious in the constitutional referendum of 16 April 2017 to introduce the presidential system, which will be effective as of the presidential elections in last quarter of the year 2019. The constitutional referendum has also brought about another important legal change, which has made it possible for President Erdoğan to become the head of the AKP again.

AKP's moderation in the first half of the 2000s seems to be a temporary strategy to attract voters' support and to make political alliances at home and abroad, so that once power is gained an

explicit illiberal agenda can be implemented. Inclusion-Moderation theory has been developed in western political systems where the moderation of religious and nationalist marginal parties has been primarily developed in relation to radical leftist parties which did not indulge in *identity politics*. In these societies, the moderation of these political parties has also resulted from a deeply-rooted secularization process. However, similar to the other cases such as in India, Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia,[16] where class-based politics and secularization processes have not been internalized by political and societal actors, AKP has also gradually turned out to be more Islamist and authoritarian by means of democratic electoral processes since the victory of Abdullah Gül in the Presidential Elections in 2007. Since then, the AKP government in Turkey seems to have generated a pattern of what one could call *structural racism*, which denotes that apparently only Islamists are now being advantaged in econonomic transactions and cliantalist relationship with the state.[17]

Thus, one could conclude that the assumptions of the inclusion-moderation thesis regarding the impact of democratic electoral competition on religious and denominational parties need to be qualified. Democratic elections in authoritarian political structures may make religious parties even more radical and proto-hegemonic, especially in non-secularized societies (Jaffrelott, 2013; Tezcür, 2010a, 2010b; Gunther and Diamond, 2003). In this respect, it seems that the Justice and Development Party started its political journey as a denominational party underlining "conservative democracy" in a dialogical modus with the members of the European Union during the deepening of the European integration process of Turkey, and now continues with a more Islamist, authoritarian, and proto-hegemonic party highlighting cultural-religious conservatism. While growing Euroscepticism has made it unnecessary for the AKP leadership to continue its moderation, one should not also underestimate the importance of newly emerging political and economic opportunities in the Middle East, the Caucasus, the Balkans, and Africa, which have made the AKP more Islamist and neo-Ottomanist, especially under the intellectual leadership of Ahmet Davutoğlu, who started his carrier as an advisor (2002-2009) to Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, then became the Foreign Minister (2009-2014), and finally became the Prime Minister (2014-2016).The question to be posed now if the AKP will remain as a political actor while Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, both the President and the head of the party, resorts more and more to Islamist behaviour and ideology? There are social-anthropological studies which show that the local Party cadre are becoming more concerned about the rise of Islamist ideology monopolizing the AKP leadership (Ocaklı, 2017). As the party gained control over municipal resources and became a dominant actor in national politics,

[16] For more discussion on the deviations of "inclusion-moderation thesis" with regards to the religious-based Hindu nationalist parties in India see Jaffrelot (2013), with regards to the Egyptian Muslim Brothers see Pahwa (2017) and with regards to the other Islamist partes in the Arab world see Marks (2015).

[17] The term "structural racism" is borrowed from the Emerging States literature, which addresses at Russia, India and China as the countries wth the same pattern. For more discussion on this topic see Bernstein (2014), and Bernstein, Roodt and Schirmer (2014).

it began to attract more careerist members, who are not necessarily Islamist and conservative. These careerist members are likely to complain about the growing Islamist ideology of the party leadership coupled with a very strong populist style. In a recent field study that we have conducted with the supporters of the AKP in Istanbul, we have also found that a group of careerist members of the Party are complaining about the risk of the AKP to lose its institutional power at the expense of Erdoğan's greater grip of power.[18] Furthermore, Erdoğan's fallout with former ally Fethullah Gülen in 2013 and afterwards led to the alienation of some local merchants who were members of the Gülen movement. It seems that these are the two major challenges now, which have the potential of challenge the party.

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