MUSLIM DEMOCRATS IN THE MAKING?

EXPLAINING TURKEY'S AKP

Paper presented at the Annual Convention of the International Studies Association, Montreal, Quebec, Canada, March 17-20, 2004.

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Abstract: *This paper is aimed at contributing to a better understanding of the relationship between religious politics and democracy in general, and political Islam and democracy in particular. For this purpose, the paper takes steps toward explaining the emergence of Turkey's ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP), by discussing it in terms of a series of analytical propositions about religious politics and democratic consolidation. The paper shows that the AKP has so far featured a significantly more liberal-democratic and pro-West discourse and program than its predecessors have. It identifies the political-economic and institutional conditions that appear to have facilitated the AKP's emergence, and places special emphasis on the EU as an external anchor and on the intended and unintended consequences of past pressures by secularist institutions. Theoretical implications as well as conditions that are necessary for the continuation and credibility of the AKP's liberal-democratization, and the related question of Turkey's democratic consolidation, are discussed.*

Key words: Islam; Democracy; Democratic Consolidation; Turkey

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I. INTRODUCTION

The evolution of Islamism in Turkey constitutes a critical test case to evaluate the prospects for democratic development in predominantly Muslim societies. Following the November 2002 elections, the AKP (Justice and Development Party) came to power and became the first Turkish party with Islamist roots to do so in a single party government. [1] In terms of its largely non-religious and pro-West program and discourse, and so far also in terms of its major policy practices, the AKP represents a radical break from that of the earlier Turkish parties inspired by Islam. It is also decisively different than moderate Islamist movements in other Muslim countries, such as Indonesia and Egypt, by the extent to which it adopts political pluralism: it claims to reject any absolutist truths in politics and accordingly lacks any reference to religion as the direct or indirect guiding principle of an ideal political system. [2]

The party's leader Tayyip Erdoğan has declared that his party is neither Islamic nor Islamist, but that it stands for "conservative democracy." [3] This was a clear effort to provide an ideological framework for his party's search for identity, and to dispel doubts, on the part of the country's secular-minded voters and civil and military institutions, about his party's long-term commitment to secularism and democracy. At the same time, his party includes various factions some which may feel more Islamist than conservative democrats. Thus, the AKP is in the process of transforming itself to a conservative-democratic force without necessarily abandoning its Islamist roots and Muslim identity. The sustainability and eventual nature of this transformation are yet uncertain and could

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[1] Öniş and Keyman (2003) and Özel (2003).
[2] For recent accounts on moderate Islamists: Wickham (2004), Baswedan (2004).
[3] See Akdoğan (2004) for the party's own version of conservative democracy. www.akparti.org.tr/muhafazakar.doc

redefine the center of Turkish politics and the "mainstream" of the Turkish society in a way that includes more piety and allows a more enhanced public role for Islam. Simultaneously, it can considerably influence our answer to a more general question, that is, the compatibility of Islam and democracy. [4]

It is crucial to ask, then, how, why and under which conditions the AKP's transformation is occurring, as this paper is intended to do. More specifically, the paper examines two questions. To what extent, how and why have the Islamist politicians whom the AKP represents, changed, and to what extent does this change reflect a long-term commitment to secular democracy in the context of Turkey's democratic consolidation? Which theoretical insights and policy implications do we gain from this case, which are applicable to other cases?

The answers to these questions are especially momentous in the present post-September 11, 2001 world. To the extent that the AKP experience proves successful in terms of Turkey's democratic consolidation and integration with western democracies, this can generate significant demonstration effects on the rest of the Muslim world and contribute to the moderation of religious identity polarization in international politics. Accordingly, Turkey's potential full membership in the EU, for which formal negotiations with the EU will begin in October 2005, have been hailed, among other reasons, as a prospect that would reduce the possibility of a global clash of civilizations. [5] If the AKP can successfully reconcile its Islamic background with the requirements of a consolidated liberal democracy, which more or less constitute the crux of the Copenhagen political criteria for full membership in the EU, it can lead the country to become the first

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[4] For recent inquiries, Zakaria (2004), Fish (2002), Esposito and Tamimi (2000).
[5] Among others, Nicolaïdis (2004: 115).

mainly Muslim society to become a full member in the union. This would demonstrate to other Muslim societies that they can modernize democratically and without sacrificing their religion; it would also boost the EU's credibility and increase its cultural, economic, and political weight among Muslim nations, and thus in world politics.

At first glance, one can easily think that all these prospects are really the expected results of Turkey's five-decades-long, discontinuous experiment with multiparty democracy in a context of at least two-centuries of continuous Europeanization/modernization. Accordingly, one may think that the fruits of this modernization experience are finally trickling down on Turkish people by giving them a more inclusive democracy: a state-centered and authoritarian-democratic version of Turkish modernity, which is deeply suspicious of religion, is giving way to a more society-centered and pluralistic-democratic version, which is more at home with religion. The latter version of modernity may entail the "vernacularization of modernity" as well as the "internal secularization of Islam," to which Turkish Muslims contributed by using the socioeconomic, technological, and political-discursive "opportunity spaces" created by the former, *Kemalist*, modernity project. [6] The AKP may be viewed as the product of this process. Yet, less than a mere decade ago such a successful democratization of Turkish modernity, which was thought to be squeezed between economic constraints on one hand, and authoritarianism and the ascendance of ethnic and religious politics on the other, was held much in doubt. [7] What happened?

The importance of the Turkish case has already motivated a growing body of literature trying to explain the AKP's rise in Turkish politics (Turkish Policy Quarterly,

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[6] Yavuz (2003). *Kemalism* refers to moral and political principles inspired by Kemal Atatürk, the founder of modern Turkey.
[7] See the contributions in Özdoğan and Kasaba (1997).

2004; Mecham, 2004; Öniş and Keyman, 2003; Jenkins, 2003; Yavuz, 2003, chap. 10).

Despite valuable contributions, however, we are far from a satisfactory explanation, which can also generate lessons for other Muslim societies and, for that matter, for predominantly Orthodox-Christian or Confucian societies that are also undergoing democratic transition. Individual discussions of these contributions will be offered later in the analysis. Here, suffice it to discuss which steps research should take toward a better explanation and how I try to address them in this paper.

First, it is important to acknowledge that the timing, that is, when and in which domestic and international context the AKP emerged, is crucial to derive a satisfactory explanation: simple and mono-causal explanations are insufficient. For example, electoral incentives may well be part of the answer why the AKP moved to the center, but it cannot be the only causal mechanism because such incentives existed since the beginning to transition to multiparty democracy in 1946. Thus, the question remains why the AKP responded to electoral incentives by choosing a centrist and moderate path, which is a different response than that of its predecessors in the 1980s and 1990s.[8] In response, this paper will weave together a multi-causal explanation and highlight its contingency on the domestic and international, economic and institutional contexts.

Second, one should separate three interrelated yet analytically different questions: (1) the AKP's electoral victory and its subsequent occupation of the political center, (2) the AKP's discursive, ideological and practical transformation, and (3) effects on democratic consolidation. The first two questions are separate because (1) did not necessarily require (2); it could have happened for example as a result of the weakening

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[8] In fact, if anything, scholars observed that the preferences of the Turkish electorate shifted to the right-of center during the 1990s. Çarkoğlu (2003).

of the centrist parties, and the inability of the leftist parties to fill the gap, alone. [9]

Likewise, (1 and 2) might be necessary, but are insufficient for (3). This is because democratic consolidation does not only require the democratic transformation of religious political forces but also that this transformation is credible and sustainable. In response, this paper will first examine the questions (2) and (3) separately, but then combine them by asking to what extent (2) is credible and sustainable so as to foster (3).

An important clarification about the limited purposes of the paper is in order here. As Stepan (2000) highlights, democratic consolidation requires "twin tolerations" by both religious and non-religious political actors. We may call the latter *secularists* who would, everything else being the same, minimize religion's public-political role and visibility. Democratic consolidation necessitates that secularists, too, make a firm commitment to democratic procedures and may necessitate that they become more tolerant of religion's social and political roles. The dynamics of this part of the democratic equation are outside the purview of this paper; I will focus on the religious actors' contribution to democratic consolidation and will assume that credible and sustainable democratic change on the part of religious actors may be necessary but is insufficient for the rise of democratic tolerance on the part of the secularists.

Third, a related issue is that in order to be able to examine the AKP's contribution to democratization, one has to conceptualize carefully what democratic change involves. Often, current research uses interrelated yet disparate concepts such as secularization, moderation, liberalization, and democratization interchangeably and without clear definition. Thus, it should be clarified upfront that the goal in this paper is to examine the

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[9] In other words, presumably, AKP could capture the center without changing or without offering a new version of political Islam that is attempting to reconcile Islam and democracy.

relationship between political Islam and liberal democracy, as opposed to alternative relationships such as Islam and electoral democracy. *Political Islam* (henceforth PI) can be defined as comprising those actors for whom Islam is (or has recently been) the primary political identity and who participate in the political process with the expressed aim of pursuing an agenda that is inspired by Islam. *Liberal democracy* (henceforth LD) distinguishes itself from electoral democracy primarily via its protection of individual freedoms such as the freedoms of thought, conscience, and association, and via its checks against the tyranny of majority in regard to these issues.

Thus, pending a better definition later in the paper and in regard to my topic here, a *liberal democratic consolidation* (henceforth LDC) requires among other things that political-Islamic actors recognize the freedoms of thought and association for non-Muslims *and* for Muslims. In an LD the main Islamic political actors should accept that those nominal Muslims who choose not to practice, not to believe, or to adopt heterodox belief systems should have the same recognition and freedoms as mainstream Muslims. Thus, these actors should be ready to abstain from using the powers of the government to favor those who share their faith or to discriminate against those who do not. Accordingly, I will simply assume that such protection of individual and minority rights requires secular government, i.e., separation of state and religion; however, the specific institutional configuration of secular government, and thus the public-political role and visibility that religious actors enjoy without undermining the twin tolerations necessary for LDC, may differ from country to country. [10]

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[10] Note that the relation between *secularization* (as opposed to secular government), which is the declining authority of religion in social, political, and economic spheres, and LD, is a separate question that is not the focus here.

Fourth, there is a need to investigate the question of Islam and democracy by drawing comparisons between different actors and periods within single cases, between cases in different Muslim societies, as well as between political Christianity and PI. The crucial condition on which the possibility and potential fruitfulness of any of these comparisons, especially the latter, depends is that one tries to conceptualize the question by using analytical terms and variables such as religious politics and mobilization, which are not culture- or country-specific. (Kalyvas, 2003). Accordingly, this paper attempts to analyze the case of the AKP, first, in comparison to its predecessors and alternatives in Turkey, and second, in general analytical-theoretical terms that enable one to draw comparisons with non-Turkish cases and inform various theoretical literatures such as democratization and identity politics.

In accordance with the above discussion, the following sections will attempt to achieve the following. The first is to demonstrate that the AKP diverges from its predecessors considerably in ways that contribute to LDC in Turkey. Second, the goal is to use theory in order to develop a simple analytical framework that can explain the AKP's transformation. Third, the goal is to explain the AKP's emergence by using this framework. As part of this goal, an objective is to identify the conditions and causal mechanism on which the sustainability of the AKP's transformation depends. Finally, it will be argued that, if continued, this transformation could produce a new and more liberal-democratic model of PI: lessons and policy implications are discussed.

II. HOW DIFFERENT IS THE AKP?

Political Islam in Turkey

The AKP was founded by the reformer-moderates (*yenilikçiler*) within the Virtue Party FP (*Fazilet Partisi*), which the Constitutional Court shut down in 2001 for being the continuation of the Welfare Party RP (*Refah Partisi*). The RP was itself closed by the Court for its alleged anti-secular activities. Thus, the AKP is rooted in a political tradition that has demonstrated significant survival skills within Turkey's strictly secular political system. Turkish secularism had originally been aimed at privatizing religion but evolved into a system featuring intensive state-regulation of religion, public promotion of a moderate and Turkish Islam, and military-backed laws and policies curbing PI. Nevertheless, PI has long been a familiar yet contentious part of Turkish democracy. [11] Until the 1970s PI was represented within the mainstream conservative parties. The first political-Islamic party was established in 1970 by a group of dissidents from the mainstream-conservative Justice Party. [12] This first Islamic party was shut down during the military coup a year later. It was soon replaced by the National Salvation Party, the MSP (*Milli Selamet Partisi*), which succeeded in becoming a junior partner in a series of coalition governments during the 1970s, with relatively low voter support of around 10 percent. The MSP was banned by the 1980-1983 military regime, along with the other political parties.

The AKP's main predecessor, the RP, was founded in 1983 by the leadership of the MSP. After a less than impressive election performance in 1987, the RP significantly increased its votes in the 1991 national elections and came out as the winner of the 1994

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[11] Davison (2003), Berkes (1998), Mardin (1986).

[12] The National Order Party (*Milli Nizam Partisi*) and the National Outlook Movement (*Milli Görüş Hareketi*).

local elections, foreshadowing its remarkable success in the national elections a year later. Following its emergence as the winner of the 1995 national election, the RP became Turkey's first party came to power as the dominant partner of a coalition government after running on an explicitly Islamist platform. The reasons for the party's success included its impressive grassroots organization that successfully combined traditional and cutting-edge methods; its ability to use religious symbolism in order to coalesce those conservative-Muslims who were economically winners of Turkey's post-1980 economic liberalization but were excluded from the country's social-political elite, with the conservative poor who were losers of integration with global economy; the relative Islamization of the Turkish society as a result of the 1980-83 military regime's policies and in line with the global trends; and the fragmentation and corruption of the mainstream parties under the weight of economic crises, the Kurdish conflict in the Southeast, and personal quarrels between mainstream leaders.

The RP skillfully capitalized on this political environment with a message that pronounced in particular the idea of a new and just order (*adil düzen*). [13] This message combined nationalist-religious tones with populist promises and the promise of a radical break with the old system, including changing Turkey's pro-West long-term foreign policy and relations with the much detested international organizations such as the IMF. Thus, this year was a watershed for Turkish PI not only because of the remarkable upward shift in its voter support, thus transforming it from a marginal to a mass party, but also because of the ambitious and comprehensive nature of its program. Buğra (2002) argues that the RP distinguished itself from earlier political-Islamic actors via its comprehensive social-political project that was "an attempt to establish religion as the

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[13] Göle (1997); Heper (1997); Yavuz (1997); Öniş (1997).

cultural basis of a comprehensive reorganization of social, economic, and political life." [14] Hence, although the RP was not a radical-fundamentalist party in terms of Brumberg's classification that will be discussed in the next section, it fit the description of a reformist-fundamentalist party. However, party members also included a younger generation of potentially liberal-Islamist moderates, reflecting a "knife-edge equilibrium" inherent to the RP's support base. [15]

The views and sympathies of the moderates were being aligned with that of the party's supporters whose interests would be hurt by a radical reorganization of society: among other things that would reshuffle Turkey's links with the West and the global economy. Either way, the party lacked the political power to reorient Turkey's pro-west economic and political system. Thus unable to launch any far-reaching reforms in the economic realm, the party focused on policies in the realms of culture and foreign policy in order to satisfy its reformist-fundamentalist clientele. These policies, such as a widely publicized first foreign visit by premier Erbakan to Libya, and plans to build a mosque in an Istanbul square that for secularists symbolized the secular lifestyle and to allow public servants to wear head scarves in government offices, proved deeply alienating to the country's secularist establishment and voters. Consequently, a broad-based social-political alliance led by the military launched a vicious public campaign against the government, which rapidly eroded its governing ability.

The final blow came in February 28, 1997, when the then military-dominated National Security Council publicly criticized the government and effectively demanded that it implement a number of secularist policies. What have been dubbed a "post-modern

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[14] p. 108.
[15] Öniş (2001).

coup" and the subsequent "February 28 process" compelled the RP government to resign in June. A crack-down on actual and perceived Islamist political and economic actors followed, along with a series of reforms, particularly in the educational realm, which were aimed at reversing the gradual, perceived Islamization of the system. All in all, Turkish Political Islamists had to endure a period of shocking defeat and disarray.

How different is the AKP from its predecessors and the rival SP?

Table 1 summarizes the results of a comparative content analysis covering the party programs of the AKP, RP, and SP, a party which is led by Erbakan's followers. In addition to assigning a lesser economic role to the state than the other two, most importantly for the purposes here, the AKP's program pronounces an unequivocal commitment to LD. After using the expression "nobody can be free unless everybody is free," the program commits the party to protecting the rights of the believers from various religions, as well as the rights of the non-believers (*inançsızlar*). The program also denounces ethnic and religious politics, which it describes as "the misuse of ethnic and religious sentiments for politics."[16]

The AKP's program downplays religious issues while emphasizing individual and human rights, economic and democratic reforms, and integration with the EU. The SP's program lays emphasis on democratization, too, however, its conception of democracy appears to be less liberal and more nationalistic: it highlights collective rights more than individual and human rights and frequently refers to the term and value of the nation and national interest. In comparison, the AKP program tends to refer to universal human rights and Turkey's international obligations based on the treaties it has signed. Conspicuously, neither the AKP nor the SP program includes an explicit reference to the

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[16] pp. 2 and 4. www.belgenet.com/parti/program/ak_1.html . Accessed on March 4, 2004.

important issue of women's rights. Both programs also lacked any direct reference to the

headscarf issue, the right of women to wear a Muslim style headscarf in universities and

government offices, which was one of the RP's banner cries.

	AKP (2001)	SP (2001)	RP (1995) [17]
Democracy	Strong emphasis on individual rights, minority rights, and civil society. Explicit rejection of the misuse of religion for politics, and of the oppression of the different interpretations and practices of religion. Conspicuous absence or shortage of references to religious rights or to the question of secularism.	Lip service to democratization and individual rights and almost no mentioning of civil society. Emphasis on the question of secularism, what it is and what it is not. Reference to individual rights and freedoms, with strong emphasis on religious freedoms.	No reference to individual or human rights. Major emphasis on social rights and freedom to practice religion.
Economic Role of the State	State's role in the economy defined as regulator and supervisor. Emphasis on (fast and transparent) privatization and structural reforms A diminished role for the state in agriculture.	Emphasis on welfare state. Need for a shift from rent-seeking economy to "just" economy. Establishment of a "guidance and guarantee fund" for agricultural sector.	Extremely significant. Strong redistributive role for the state. An active role for the state in subsidizing industrial development. Privatization de-emphasized.
Nationalism	Weak nationalistic flavor Almost every policy and reform is justified by reference to international treaties, especially the Copenhagen Criteria, and globalization. Emphasis on Turkey's need to keep pace with regional and global trends	Moderate nationalistic flavor. National interest frequently used as justification of policy positions. Lip service to international obligations. Embrace of integration with the EU.	Very strong nationalistic flavor. Conceives Turkey as the leader of the Muslim world.
Religion and Moral Values	Defines itself as conservative-democratic and emphasizes values, traditions, and social	Moral-ethical values and spiritualism offered as the ultimate solution to most	Very strong. Outlines specific

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[17] Third column draws on Öniş (2001: 288).

	norms as crucial in the good working of the system. No special reference to religious values.	problems (e.g. poverty). Advocates mandatory religion and ethics classes in schools. Critical of materialism.	recommendations with special reference to Islamic values and practices. A major distinguishing characteristic of the party program.

Table 1. Comparative Evaluation of the Party Programs of the AKP, SP, and RP.

As Table 2 offers examples, the programs of the AKP and the SP also differ drastically in terms of their discourse and symbolism. The AKP's highlight discontinuity with the earlier tradition of Turkish PI represented by the RP, while the SP's display a clear continuity with the RP tradition, although reflecting a less radical, more secular, and pro-West version. The SP program's accentuates the values of justice and welfare, which are discursively and conceptually associated with the RP, while the AKP program's relative downplaying of these values makes the opposite point. In fact, on the SP's official web site, whenever the program used the term welfare (*refah*), which was also in the name of the RP, even in the middle of a sentence, the term was always capitalized, even though the term was used in a different context, i.e., it did not directly refer to the RP.

In general, the SP's program frequently employs a vocabulary borrowed from the Ottoman Turkish, which is associated in Turkey with the old-school conservative politics and PI. In comparison, the AKP program employs a modern Turkish vocabulary that is reminiscent of center-left parties. Notably, although both programs make references to moral values, the SP employs Ottoman-Turkish terms such as *maneviyat* (spirituality) while the AKP program employs modern   substitutes. Casual observations of the AKP leader Erdoğan's discourse also indicate a shift away from the RP's values to pro-West

liberal democratic values. However it is also important to note that he makes skillful use, even accentuation, of the terminology borrowed from Islam and Muslim clergy. [18]

Word	AKP-Program (per 10 pages) [19]	SP-Program (per 10 pages)
Refah (welfare)[20]	2.0	6.4
Religion	1.6	3.8
Muslim	0.0	0.5
Human rights	2.0	1.3
Justice (*Adalet*)[21]	2.9	9.7
Civil Society	4.7	2.0
Minority[22]	0.6	0
Morality (*Ahlak*)	0.8	3.3
Spirituality (*Maneviyat*)	0.0	3.1
Nation (*millet*)	1.6	9.2

Table 2. Comparative Frequency of Key Terms in the Party Programs of the AKP and SP. [23]

Finally, the AKP has a significantly broader electoral base than its predecessors and the SP, as Figure 1 demonstrates.

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[18] Can Dündar, "Erdoğan'ın Sözcük Oyunu," (Erdoğan's Play with Words), *Milliyet*,9.10.2003. http://www.milliyet.com/2003/10/19/yazar/dundar.html . Accessed on: 03.03.2004. Also see Heper (2002).
[19] Page lengths were standardized in word processor for both programs.
[20] The term welfare is also the name of the RP.
[21] Key concept in the RP's platform.
[22] The program makes clear that the terms minority (*azinlik*) and majority (*çoğunluk*) encompass political minorities and majorities, as in Islamists or secularists. The version in www.belgenet.com.tr uses the apparently more general term *azlık* instead of *azinlik*, which is normally used in Turkey to denote ethnic or religious (Christian) minorities.
[23] AKP Program: http://www.akparti.org.tr/program.asp , accessed on March 3, 2004 and http://www.belgenet.com/parti/program/ak_1.html , accessed on March 3, 2004; SP Program: http://www.sp.org.tr , accessed on March 3, 2004.
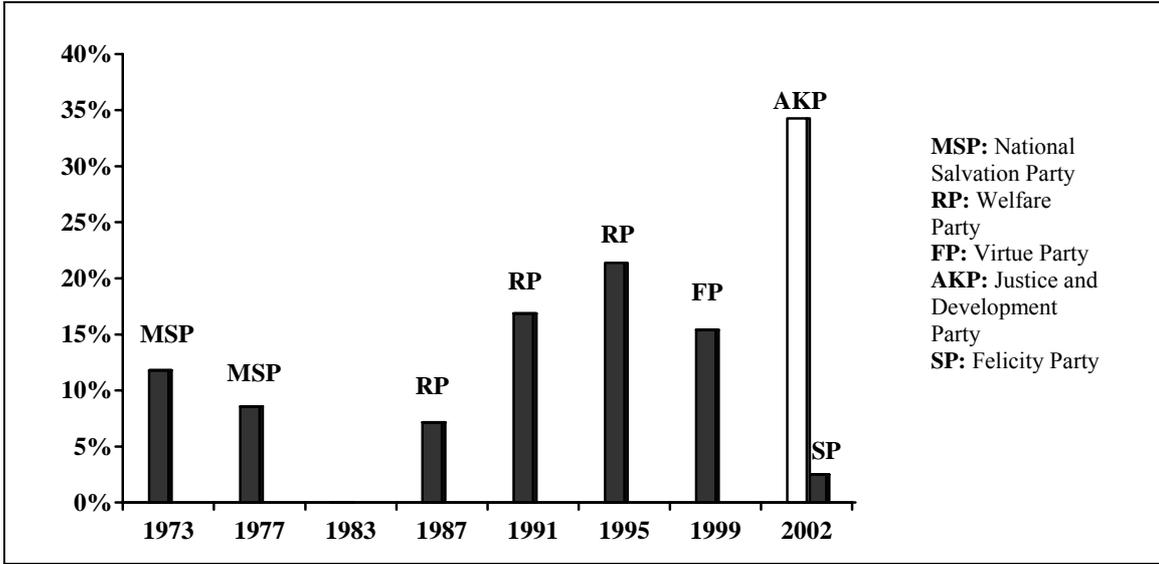
Figure 1. National Election Performances of the AKP and of Its Predecessors,
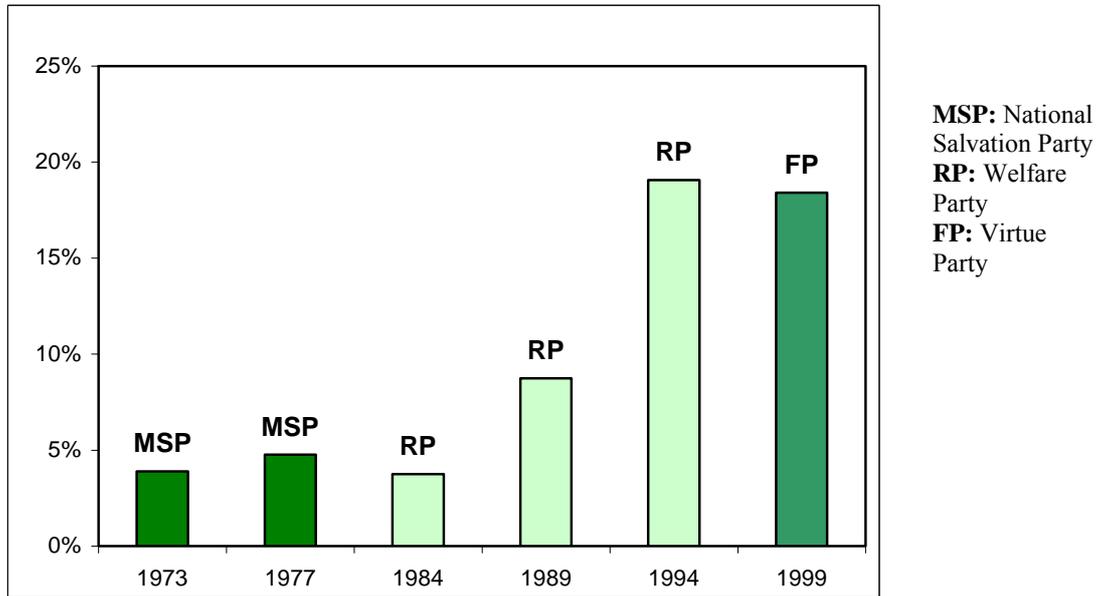In terms of Percentages of National Votes. [24]

Figure 2. Local Election Performances of the AKP and of its Predecessors,
in terms of Percentages of National Votes. [25]

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[24] Source: www.secimsonucu.com. Accessed on March 4, 2004.

III. POLITICAL ISLAM AND DEMOCRACY: TOWARD A DYNAMIC AND
CONTINGENT EXPLANATION

This section is by no means intended to offer a comprehensive review of the vast literature on PI and democracy. Instead, the goal is to walk through the mental building blocks of a simple analytical framework to be developed in a series of propositions regarding the relationship between PI and LD. Scholars who study PI can roughly be divided into two groups, the pessimists and the optimists. As a result of an essentialist and static reading of Islamic religion and practice, pessimists maintain that Islam and democracy, especially LD, are inherently incompatible. [26] For example, Huntington simply maintains that "Islamic culture explains in large part the failure of democracy to emerge in much of Muslim world." [27] Since culture is, however vaguely defined, largely understood to be static or slow-changing, this makes genuine democracy a rather dim prospect for predominantly Muslim societies. In support of this view, there is not yet a predominantly Muslim society with a consolidated democratic system.

However, for two major reasons, there is no need to believe that Islam in the sense of a set of religious beliefs is inherently less compatible with LD than other monotheistic religions such as Christianity and Judaism are, or have been. First, even if we consider religious dogma to be rather unchanging, religious practices, and their manifestations in the forms of political identities and mobilization, do change. Thus, arguably, the experience of Christian Democracy has demonstrated that religious politics can change, and that under favorable conditions such change can make religious politics compatible with LD (Kalyvas, 1996). Second, even writers who focus on the causal roles of

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[25] Source: http://www.yerelnet.org.tr/secimler/ . Accessed on: March 3, 2004.
[26] Among others, Huntington (1996); Kramer (1997).
[27] Huntington (1996: 29).

ideational, religion-specific variables such as the religious dogma highlight that there has been enormous diversity and change within Islamic theology and philosophy over time. [28] To rule out the possibility that Islamic doctrines and political practices change in accordance with LD would "deprive contemporary Muslims of any agency or history, since they force Muslims to repeat the past compulsively in order to remain faithful to their identity" (Casanova 2001: 1054).

What about the empirical facts that in general the Muslim world is an underdeveloped and undemocratic world and that "Muslimness" is highly correlated with economic and democratic underdevelopment? [29] In large, cross-country samples, Muslimness may appear as a marker of other social and institutional qualities that are unfavorable to economic and political development. Such qualities, which are hard to be measured and included as variables in large-n studies, may include political traditions of personalistic rule and social-legal norms such as those encouraging female subordination[30] and those obstructing the development of impersonal exchange relations and the growth of corporations. [31] As contingent outcomes of dimly understood historical-institutional processes that affected Muslim societies more than they did the rest, these qualities might have prevented the emergence of Islamic political actors who genuinely and credibly support LD; in other words, they might have prevented the emergence of Islamic or Conservative-Muslim democrats. In this sense, one may talk about an indirect causal link between Islam and democratic underdevelopment. However, such an indirect link that results from historical-institutional processes would not rule out

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[28] E.g. El-Effendi (2000).
[29] Kuran (1997); Fish (2002).
[30] Fish (2002).
[31] Çızakça (2002); Kuran (2003).

the possibility that Muslims develop their own Islamic-democrats in the future because it does not result from slow-moving and emotionally charged factors such as culture and identity.

Proposition 1: *It is possible that religious political actors in general, and PI in particular, change their ideology and practices so as to make their ideologies and practices more compatible with LD, without necessarily abandoning thereby their religious identity or diminishing their faith.*

The optimists agree that PI can change and maintain rightly that suspicious elites often undermine this possibility through their oppressive practices that radicalize moderate Islamic actors who are the potential agents of change. [32] However, optimists tend to insufficiently problematize the social, institutional, and political-economic preconditions and causal mechanisms that are necessary for the democratic transformation of PI. Optimists thus tend to exaggerate the contribution that PI can make to democratization by committing what I may call *the optimist's fallacy*: the impression given that liberating Islamic actors from any legal-political restrictions and social-economic prejudices surrounding them would automatically serve economic development, advance democratization, and even help to transcend "the Washington consensus rooted in Anglo-Saxon capitalism." [33]

The democratization of Islamic politics in a context of LDC, as in Christian Democracy in Western Europe, is a complex and demanding process. This process may be ongoing in some cases, but is yet unfinished. Its completion requires the irreversible emergence of institutions that comply with twin tolerations: "the minimal boundaries of

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[32] Among others, Esposito (1995); Henry and Springborg (2001).
[33] Henry (1999).

freedom of action that must somehow be crafted for political institutions vis-à-vis religious authorities, and for religious individuals and groups vis-à-vis political institutions." [34] Stepan compellingly demonstrates that various, not one, institutional configurations can produce twin tolerations. Thus, one should not draw on a "wall of separation" that is supposed to exist between the church and state in Europe and instead keep in mind that democratic consolidation takes "constant construction and resconstruction of the twin tolerations," which may produce different institutional designs in different countries. [35] The constant construction and reconstruction that is to occur between the main societal actors in each case can produce different institutional *setups* that fulfill the same *function*, the twin tolerations. [36]

Proposition 2: *LDC can be produced by different institutional designs that fulfill the same function: twin tolerations between secularist and religious political actors. On the part of the religious actors, this requires that they tolerate liberal-democratic procedures and freedoms for all, including for their coreligionists who share their religious identity either by choice or by ascription.*

But what would make religious actors' acceptance of these freedoms credible? Unless this acceptance is a credible, long-term commitment, secularist actors would continue to contemplate that non-democratic safeguards such as a secularist army are necessary and would thus violate the key criterion for LDC, which is that LD is the only game in town. [37] Stepan maintains that in order to be effective the twin tolerations between religious and secularist forces have to be supported by constitutional guarantees

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[34] Stepan (2000: 37).
[35] p. 42.
[36] I owe the terminology of different institutional designs fulfilling the same "functions" to Dani Rodrik. Lecture on Growth Strategies, Koç University, İstanbul, February 16, 2004.
[37] See Linz and Stepan (1996) for a discussion.

and by the supervision of a strong *and* democratic civil society. But what would make constitutional guarantees effective and produce a sufficiently strong and democratic civil society? Are these two checks necessary or sufficient? As Stepan realizes, formal commitments to LD can be revoked when they are no longer in actors' self-interest. [38] One cannot take on faith that the democratization of Islamist politics in countries such as Turkey, Indonesia, or Bangladesh will continue on this process uninterrupted, by focusing on positive examples.

Brumberg (1997) divides PI into "radical fundamentalists," "reformist fundamentalists" or "tactical modernists," and "strategic modernists." While radical fundamentalists explicitly reject democracy and pursue an Islamic state, reformist fundamentalists and tactical modernists embrace democratic institutions and discourses instrumentally, without abandoning their long-term pursuit of an Islamic state that would abolish LD. Strategic modernists, who may be more aptly called Islamic liberals and who more or less correspond to Muslim liberal-democrats here, are crucially different from the first two types because of their embrace of LD as a value system. Thus, in terms of my discussion here, LDC should entail genuine change in the values of the main actors of PI from "reformist fundamentalist" to Muslim liberal-democratic.

Proposition 3. *LDC requires that the main political actors' commitment to LD is credible and long-lasting. In addition to legal and institutional checks and balances, this requires that religious actors' acceptance of liberal-democratic procedures and freedoms for all is not instrumental but entails the internalization of liberal-democratic values.*

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[38] Similarly, Casanova (2001) and Çızakça (2002) insufficiently elaborate on the conditions that would make the democratic checks and balances, and "elite settlement for democracy" credible and effective.

Accordingly, Kalyvas' (2003) analyses democratic consolidation in a context of "unsecular politics and religious contribution" as an endogenous process whereby competition and iteration inherent to democracy can "transform initial [temporary or insincere] commitments into long-term values." [39] Kalyvas realizes that ideational liberal-democratization on the part of religious actors is neither necessary nor sufficient for democratic transition to begin. In fact, he acknowledges that these actors may pose a potential threat to LD via their "antiliberal and antisecular" message; alternatively, their acceptance of LD may be purely tactical. Rather than being alarmist, however, he maintains that the key question that research should investigate is under which conditions these actors "will be willing *and* [emphasis mine] able to moderate and incorporate successfully in emerging democracies." [40]

In the case of Europe, electoral imperatives and non-electoral constraints such as military-secular alliances, in addition to realism and pragmatism, compelled Christian Democrats to moderate. And, the hierarchical organization of Catholicisim *enabled* the 'moderate' religious actors to control the radicals and thus credibly signal to secular actors their willingness to adjust. Although he does not elaborate on the exact mechanisms, Kalyvas' analysis implies that the value changes inherent to Stepan's twin tolerations arise as a by-product of this process. In a nutshell, successful moderation on the part of religious actors only includes a willingness to "decrease the saliency of their religious goals and accept operating within competitive and secular institutional frames" and the ability to make a credible commitment that they can speak for the rest of the

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[39] p. 297.
[40] Kalyvas (2003: 309).

religious community also. [41] Value change follows in the footsteps of this process. This way of looking at moderation is consistent with the literature on political opportunity structures in explaining political movements. [42] Electoral and discursive opportunities encourage the adoption of a more democratic program and discourse. Value change, i.e. the internalization of democracy by the movement and by its constituency, may follow if the movement continues to be able to represent its constituency. In addition to organizational requirements, critically, this depends on whether or not the new discourse and program continue to provide political and economic rewards for the movement and its constituency.

Proposition 4: *What can be called liberal-democratic transition occurs when (i) political opportunities to embrace liberal-democratic procedures exist (ii) the acceptance of liberal-democratic procedures and discourse serves the interests of the main actors of PI and (iii) when these actors are able to make commitments that are binding to all of them as a group. LDC requires that these conditions continue long enough so that tactical and discursive commitments evolve into lasting value commitments. The ability of the PI actors to make commitments for their constituency may critically depend on their ability to provide political and socio-economic benefits for their constituency by using the democratic strategy.*

Proposition 5: *Value change on the part of the political and economic actors occurs over time, when a successful political strategy that might initially have been adopted for instrumental reasons affects actors' values. The causal mechanisms that bring about change include cognitive-psychological mechanisms such as cognitive dissonance*

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[41] Ibid., p. 309. Also see Kalyvas (1998).
[42] Among others, see Tarrow (1998).

reduction, critical public deliberation taking place among actors, and time and generational change that make certain values first unthinkable and then unthought. [43]

In analyzing the initial choices to embrace liberal-democratic procedures and discourses, there are important reasons to analytically separate the interests and behavior of economic and political actors. First, this is necessary in order to highlight the causal mechanisms, such as strategic interest, increasing trust, or learning, that lead to democratic choices. For example, the changing interests of Islamic economic entrepreneurs, who constitute a major part of the PI's constituency as financiers, activists, and opinion-makers, may be one major causal mechanism leading Islamic political entrepreneurs to interpret electoral incentives in one way or another. Identifying this mechanism is necessary in order to be able to make any policy suggestions as to how to support LDC in a country. Second, the interests of Islamic economic and political entrepreneurs do not always overlap. For example, Islamic economic actors may favor economic liberalization and political stability, but not necessarily LD. Meanwhile, Islamic political actors, who need to pursue the right combination of policies in the realms of economic, social, and foreign policy enables them to come to, and maintain, power, may seek more LD than economic entrepreneurs may want to tolerate. Alternatively, in order to fulfill their promise of creating a more just and Islamic society, political entrepreneurs may seek more Islamization in the social realm, say by banning alcohol, than economic entrepreneurs would tolerate without hurting their economic interests, say diminishing revenues from tourism. Such conflicts of interest within PI may be essential to explain PI's evolution in a specific domestic and international context.

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[43] Kuran (1995, especially ch. 11); Harmon-Jones and Mills (1999).

Proposition 6: *Islamic political actors are primarily interested in acquiring and maintaining political power by adopting the best political strategy(ies) available. In doing this, they have to balance their goal of enhancing and maintaining their political support base, which includes the support of their economic constituency, with their goal of transforming the society in their image of a better, more Islamic society.*

Proposition 7: *The economic constituencies of Islamic political actors are primarily interested in balancing their economic interests (material wealth) with their socio-economic (pursuit of status) and value-related interests. Their socio-economic interests include identity recognition, i.e. the pursuit of social status without abandoning their Islamic identity, and value-related interests include their interest in living in a society where Islamic values and practices have more currency.*

Proposition 8. *Political actors' efforts to adopt the best available strategy entail historical learning: strategies shown to be ineffective or counter-productive (in terms of the actors' own goals) in the past, given the credible commitments of other social-political actors and institutions in society, are no longer considered.*

IV. EXPLAINING THE AKP'S EMERGENCE

How and why did the AKP emerge?

Table 3 summarizes six political-economic and ideational causal factors and mechanisms, which appear to have contributed to the AKP's emergence. A more rigorous evaluation of the causal contribution that each might have made is the subject of another study. Rather than seeking such a streamlined explanation, the goal in this paper is to identify and describe the causal factors which may have worked jointly or independently.

Causal Factor	Effect
Vertical and Horizontal Interventions	Lesson taken by Islamic political and economic entrepreneurs was that Radical-Islamic and pro-strong state paths are closed
Electoral Incentives	Moderation and move to the center
The unintended consequences of the secularist restrictions in the 1990s	Exit of young Islamists to the West; Personal experience with the importance of individual human rights
Economic Liberalization and Economic Globalization: Diminishing Dependence and Vulnerability of Islamic Business Groups	Pro-LD change in the interests of economic constituency
Weakening Center: Corruption and atrophy among secular parties and economic crises	Political opportunity to capture the center
The EU anchor	Anchors policies in a liberal-democratic basis; constrains the extent to which Islam can be emphasized as political and national identity without jeopardizing prospects for EU membership.

Table 3. Causal factors explaining the AKP's emergence

Sweet Power and Bitter Defeat

The February 28 process, which led to the RP's closure and eventually to the AKP's foundation, undoubtedly was a blow to Turkey's democracy. Clearly, democracy was not the only game in town when power changed hands as a result of military, bureaucratic, and societal pressures that forced the RP-led government to resign. In terms of direct effects, it is hard to imagine how the process could have contributed to the development of Stepan's twin tolerations or to the development of trust in democratic institutions.

Indirectly, however, this vertical (military-bureaucratic) and horizontal (secular societal forces) intervention might have contributed to democratic transition by discrediting certain political paths for Islamic actors. [44] In particular, the intervention might have demonstrated the unavailability of two strategies, in accordance with

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[44] See also Öniş (2001).

Proposition 8 above. First, the intervention credibly demonstrated that the militant-fundamentalist, and, to some degree, the reformist-fundamentalist, strategies were blocked. Second, the intervention discredited pro-strong state or state-dependent strategies as opposed to strategies based in civil society and human rights. Despite their confrontational relationship with the secular Turkish state, until 1997, Turkish PI had also had a nationalistic tone that favored a strong state. Its goal had not been to undermine the authoritarian state but to instrumentalize it; thus, for example, political Islamists would not turn against the state when its policies hurt the leftists or Kurdish nationalists. The February 28 process broke down this tie of trust and sympathy between the state and the Islamists, by personally hurting the Islamists. [45]

The understanding that the militant-fundamentalist and state-dependent paths cannot work might explain a great deal of the AKP's emphasis of liberalism and human rights. In fact, on the sixth anniversary of February 28, Erdoğan argued that the February 28 process should end because "if there were any positive lessons to be taken from it, these lessons have already been taken." [46]

Electoral Pressures

As a result of its remarkable success in November, 2002, the AKP's electoral base has clearly expanded beyond the traditional base of Political Islamists. Survey studies suggest that the overwhelming majority of the Turkish electorate adheres to a notably tolerant version of Islam. The share of the Turkish electorate who approves Islamic Law, and presumably constituting the potential constituency for militant- or reformist-

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[45] Özel (2003).
[46] "28 Şubat Artık Gündemde Olmamalı" (February 28 Should No Longer Be On the Agenda), Interview with Murat Çelik, *Tercüman*, February 28, 2004. www.tercumangazete.com , accessed on February 28, 2004.

fundamentalism, is around 10 percent. [47] While this amounted to about half of the RP's electoral base, it amounts to less than a third of the AKP's electorate. Thus, the weight of these voters within the AKP constituency is significantly less than what it used to be within the RP constituency. The AKP has to take into account the preferences of all of its voters, and that of others if it wants to gain more support from the center of the electorate. These electoral pressures explain part of the drive of the AKP to the mainstream. At the same time, one should keep in mind that the AKP can face competition from the right and lose some of its more religious supporters to parties such as the SP.

The unintended consequences of the secularist restrictions

I argued elsewhere that Turkey's legal-political restrictions on Kurdish nationalism tend to disproportionately affect moderate Kurdish actors, driving them out of the public-political space; this has negative consequences for democratization in regard to ethnic politics, possibly as an unintended consequence of restrictive policies. [48] Similar dynamics may be in play in regard to PI, albeit with some unintended positive effects on democratization as well.

For example, one effect of such restrictions appears to have been the rising numbers of students with Islamic backgrounds choosing to study abroad. During the 1990s, the number of Turks who chose to obtain higher and graduate education outside of Turkey, in countries such as the United States, EU countries, and Middle Eastern countries, reached significant levels. Official numbers hover around 20,000, while unofficial estimates suggest 50,000 because many students who use private funds fail to register with the consulates. Certainly, many of these students have motivations unrelated

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[47] Çarkoğlu and Toprak (2000). Approval of Islamic Law is defined as approving *actual* changes in the present, secular laws. Rhetorical approval of Islamic Law is found to be double this percentage.
[48] Somer (2002 and 2004).

to the subject here, such as not being placed in a university in Turkey. Presumably, however, a significant share of these students is motivated by the ban of headscarves in Turkish universities. [49] I think that the effect of this experience on the part of the emerging Islamic-conservative elites with higher education in western democracies is two-fold. First, these students obtain first-hand experience of LD. Second, one's having to study abroad because of one's religious values is a bitter experience with authoritarian democracy, which might affect the values and discourse of these students in a liberal-democratic direction. Although personal observations suggest that at least some of the students who studied abroad, especially those who studied in the US, tend to adopt upon their return the discourse of LD, requesting the same religious and other personal liberties they enjoyed abroad at home, in the present this is only a hypothesis that needs to be tested. My general point here is that secular restrictions can generate a number of unintended effects some of which may indirectly serve democratic transition.

Diminishing Dependence and Fear of Islamic Business Groups

Depending on their degree of dependence on an authoritarian state for survival, security of property rights, and organizational cohesiveness, business may or may not be an active supporter of democracy. [50] Since the 1980s, structural changes in the Turkish economy have facilitated the major business interest groups' adopting a more pro-democracy stand, although their relative focus has often been on "good governance" rather than on civil and human rights. [51] Two developments are in particular important for my subject here. First, with the shift of the economic growth strategy from inward-

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[49] See for example "Özgür Üniversiteye Kaçıyorlar," (They are Escaping to Free Universities). Interview with Yusuf Kara, Vice President of the Alumni Association of Religious Secondary Schools (*Imam Hatip Liseleri*) Önder. www.ogretmenlersitesi.com , accessed on March 4, 2004.
[50] Parsa (1995); Bellin (2000).
[51] Öniş and Türem (2001).

looking growth strategies via import-substitution policies to the outward-looking strategies via international trade and finance liberalization, business in general became less dependent on the state for its growth. Second, with the end of the Cold War, the fear of militant labor mobilization that could result from democratization relatively subsided. Third, the locus of industrial production significantly shifted from the major metropolitan areas in the coastal areas to the (*Anatolian*) province. Thus, industrial and financial capital, which was previously concentrated in the hands of the habitually secular big urban business groups, spread to the more traditional and religious owners of small and medium enterprises in *Anatolian* towns and emerging metropolis. [52] The political results of these developments have been the growing needs for social and political status on the part of this dynamic bourgeoisie, which has not abandoned its traditional-religious values and life styles despite its increasing and adoption of global consumption patterns, discourse, and ideas.

The new bourgeoisie has organized its interests on local, national, and transnational levels and constitutes an important portion of the AKP's constituency. For several reasons, it can be argued that the interests of this constituency lie in liberal-democratization. First, as already argued, prior secular interventions have shown that the strategies of militant, tactical, and reformist fundamentalism are closed. Second, increasingly, the interests of the Anatolian bourgeoisie lie in integration with the global economy, which radical fundamentalist strategies would undermine. Third, 'Islamic' business constitutes a diverse lot, which employs Islam as a source of cultural identity and discourse, vision of modernity, and source of trust and solidarity to differing degrees. Thus, while in general these business groups tend to have a community-based, as opposed

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[52] Among others, Buğra (2002).

to individual-based, notion of democracy, Islam is not always the dominant source of group identity and discourse; nationalism, ethnicity, and local identities are frequently observed alternatives. [53] Hence, the cultural vision of the AKP's economic constituency is not exclusively or predominantly based in Islam.

The EU Anchor

The last but not the least, the AKP's economic constituency, like the rest of Turkey's economic interest groups, stands to gain from further integration with the EU, via the enhanced access to European markets and capital, human rights standards, and good governance that the EU membership is expected to deliver. Thus, Turkey's ongoing integration with the EU in pursuit of full membership anchors the interests of the AKP's economic constituency in a liberal model of democracy, in accordance with the Copenhagen criteria, which forms the basis of the conditions for full membership.

Similarly, the political-Islamic elite favors the EU membership because of the status it would bring to Turkish PI as a whole and to the AKP in particular, and because of the freedom it would bring from Turkey's secularist military-bureaucratic institutions. Their behavior is also anchored in the Copenhagen criteria.

There is an intense political debate inside the EU regarding the controversial role of Christianity within the European identity, whereby liberal and social democrats would like to minimize the weight of Christian values and identities within the European identity and institutions. Given this context, the facts that Turkey has a predominantly Muslim population and is ruled by a party with a significant Islamic identity, have

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[53] Keyman and Koyuncu (forthcoming, 2004). Keyman and Koyuncu argue that in this regard SIADs, local business organizations, differ from MÜSIAD, which is the major national-level business organization representing the new bourgeoisie.

recently increased the popularity of Turkey's membership because it would significantly enhance Europe's religious-cultural plurality.

Thus, the AKP can to a certain degree capitalize on Turkey's Muslim identity in order to improve Turkey's chances to join the union. However, this strategy is restricted by the political balances of power and the cultural-psychological biases in European countries. Any effort on Turkey's part to emphasize its Muslim culture and identity beyond a certain symbolic and cultural level would undermine its prospect for memberships: this would enable those European actors who oppose Turkey's membership to capitalize on Europeans' existing fears of foreigners in general and of Islam in particular. Thus, it would cost the government dearly in terms of failure vis-a-vis EU membership. Conversely, progress toward membership is sure to pay plenty of dividends politically, as popular support for membership is strong. Hence, the EU anchor restricts the AKP's political ability to emphasize its Islamic identity and provides an incentive to undergo a liberal-democratic transformation.

V. SUMMARY CONCLUSIONS

If the AKP can maintain both its liberal-democratic and moderate Islamic-conservative program and policies, and its ability to represent the majority of the Islamic constituency in Turkey, it may well become Muslim-conservative force with indigenous and internalized democratic credentials. What would this depend on? Two factors are likely to become crucial.

First, the role of the external anchors, most importantly the EU but also the US, will be crucial. This is because the AKP's ability to deliver tangible political and

socioeconomic benefits to its constituency will crucially depend on the continuation of the EU-integration process, as well as of the economic reform process which Turkey embarked on with significant US backing. The worsening of Turkish-US relations because of the war in Iraq is a worrisome development in this respect.

Second, the AKP's ability to regulate and represent Islamic communities, which are traditionally decentralized, will be crucial. In Turkey, religion is heavily regulated by the state, through the DRA (Directorate of Religious Affairs). The DRA is a non-elected institution that does not represent various sects and interpretations equally. It is rightly criticized for failing to provide fair representation for example for the *Alevi* Muslims, and for financing religious activities with tax money. At the same time, the DRA has performed the function of promoting a rather liberal interpretation of Islam, which may be viewed as a public good from the point of view of liberal Muslims, non-Muslims, and non-believers, and it can be reformed so that it becomes more representative. To some extent, its financing can also be reformed in such a way that it is funded by people who use its services.

Thus, in light of the theoretical discussion above and of the current transition in Turkey, the DRA's centralized structure can be viewed as a potential means to make credible commitments to LD. From this viewpoint, it is interesting to note that the AKP is already using the DRA in order to implement its human rights agenda, for example by summoning state-appointed imams to tell to the prayers in Friday sermons that "honor killings" of women are sins against God. [54] Similarly, steps have been taken to increase the diversity of religious services, for example, by including information on the Alevis in religion classes.

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[54] "Thou shalt not kill," *Economist*, February 21st-27th, 2004.

Finally, it is important to underline that the continuation of the current liberal-democratic transition of Turkish PI is contingent upon the continuation of the conditions discussed above. The AKP has a conservative wing resistant to LD, and the suspicions of the country's secularist establishment are very much alive. In accordance with the propositions 5 and 6, only time will tell whether twin tolerations or intolerances will prevail.

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