

Prisoner Erdogan's Dilemma and the Origins of Moderate Islam in Turkey

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This case study, appropriate for undergraduate and MA-level courses in comparative politics addressing themes such as democratization, political parties and electoral systems, Middle Eastern politics, and political development. It is also appropriate for undergraduate international relations courses, especially those seeking to understand the politics of the post-9/11 world and to disaggregate the forms taken by Islamist politics. Indeed, the case was written as a means by which the authors sought to convey the wide range of practices of Islamist politics, including moderate Islamist regimes. What makes the Turkish example special is that it is simultaneously a country where religious extremists operate routinely and one which has witnessed the rise of the most influential moderate Islamist movement in the Muslim world. The Turkish lesson suggests that democratic attitudes can flourish even among previously undemocratic actors, Islamist or not, if surrounding conditions encourage such a change. For a copy of the instructor's notes, please email Todd Eisenstadt at eisensta@american.edu.

In the Spring of 1999 former Istanbul Mayor Recep Tayyip Erdogan went to prison after being convicted of "inciting hatred, based on religious differences" in a poem the Islamist politician recited some eighteen months earlier in the conservative rural southeastern city of Siirt.ⁱⁱ

State pressure against Islamic activists had intensified since the rise of Islamist political parties in the 1990s, but particularly in 1997 and 1998, in response to the Islamist Prosperity Party's (RP) take-over as leader of the 1996-1998 coalition government with the True Path Party (DYP). At a monthly meeting of Turkey's National Security Council (NSC), the Council Secretary presented RP leader and Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan with a list of 18 proposals

designed to prevent the Islamization of the proudly secular nation. Erbakan had to resign soon after the event as a result of increased pressures against him and his party.

Erdogan was at a personal crossroads just as his country faced a political crisis. Indeed, Erdogan's story intertwined with the rise and evolution of political Islam in Turkey, which had been perhaps the Muslim Middle East's most fiercely secular state since 1923 when the brilliant military leader and founder of modern secular Turkey, Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, discredited the Islamic sultanate (the monarch in command of the Ottoman Empire's political and religious institutions).

The conflict between the secularist and Islamist camps prompted confrontations in Turkey, especially after the 1980 coup. The 1980-1983 military regime sought to give an end to the violent left-right conflict which had already defined Turkish politics during the 1970s. The military generals found the solution in erasing the Left from Turkish political life through a series of repressive measures and promoting instead an Islamic-nationalist discourse and neo-liberal economic policies to erase the memories of previous eras and unite the people under a common ideology.

Nevertheless, unification was not quite the outcome. When the "Pandora's Box" was opened, Islamism engulfed Turkish society, rapidly becoming the most powerful symbolic opposition to the state establishment and the regime. With the evaporation of the Left, its constituency groups, mostly consisting of people from lower status, turned to Islamism in their fight for better lives. As a result of accelerated migrations from provinces to urban areas in the 1980s (thanks to the neo-liberal policies that increased the demand for work force in cities) Islam which found particular support in the provinces was carried to urban areas as well and provided the political arena for the migrants who sought to open up a space for themselves in the urban

life. On the other hand, the Westernist elites from the urban middle- and upper-middle classes claimed secularism as a way to protect their life styles and opportunities.

Under the circumstances, social conflict in Turkey was soon reordered along secularist-Islamist lines. The previous conservative right shifted to the Islamic camp, the far left radicalized, and most of the center-right and center-left united under secularism. The rise of Islam did have another effect: as Islam emerged as a resource to challenge the regime and the state, the military and other secularist institutions returned to their traditional roles of backing up the secularist establishment state and the status quo. In the 1990s, the secularist-Islamist conflict peaked. With the Islamic RP gaining control first through municipal and then through national elections, the secularist institutions took measures to prevent a complete Islamic take-over.

In March 1998, the military chief of staff described political Islam as the number one enemy of the principles of modern Turkey and blacklisted companies said to be owned by radical Islamists, excluding these from bidding in military auctions (Bugra 1998). In January 1998 the Supreme Constitutional Court banned the pro-Islam RP after the party's first year ever in government. Islamist politicians, including RP's popular Istanbul's RP mayor, Erdogan, were also prosecuted for their statements on the role of religion in society. In September 1999, the Diyarbakir State Security Court sentenced Erdogan to a year in prison and banned him for life from political activism (Human Rights Watch 1999, <http://www.hrw.org/worldreport99/europe/turkey.html>). Although Erdogan twice managed to have the sentence converted into a monetary fine and postponed, he lost a final appeal and then had to serve 120 days of a 10-month prison sentence. After being accompanied by 2,000 cars in an impromptu motorcade to prayer at the Fatih Mosque in downtown Istanbul, Erdogan entered the prison.

As Erdogan sat in the darkness of a prison cell, he must have wondered whether it had been worth it. While in jail, he met with RP party members Abdulkadir Aksu and Azmi Ates. The three talked about the future of the party and criticized its leadership for the party's vote share decline in the 1999 national parliamentary elections (Milliyet 20 July 1999). The party was not gaining supporters or achieving meaningful policy change, given pressures by the secularist military, and the Supreme Court's shut-down of the party and imprisonment of its leaders. Radical confrontation between the RP and the military-secularist establishment was not beneficial to Erdogan or his party anymore. The declining votes had sent a clear message that radical, fundamentalist opposition to the regime had reached a point of diminishing returns. The RP's platform had been quite radical (see Table 1).

Table 1: Islamist RP Leader Positions on Controversial Issues

Democracy	When asked his views about democracy during an interview with a secularist newspaper in July 1996, Erdogan had said that democracy is not an end, but only a means.
Alcohol	As mayor of Istanbul, Erdogan banned alcohol in publicly-owned restaurants.
Veil	In the past, both Erbakan and Erdogan mentioned several times that they were against the law forbidding the public use of veils or headscarves by university students or public employees. Before the 1995 elections that brought him to power, Erbakan had pledged that when RP came to power, university deans would have to salute veiled students.
Birth Control	As mayor of Istanbul, Erdogan had said that he personally did not practice birth control and was against it because the future of Turkey required a dynamic [and presumably sizeable] young population.
Shaking Hands with Women	In 1993, Erdogan had stated that shaking hands with the opposite sex was a social habit contrary to his beliefs. Yet, when a woman offered her hand, he did shake her hand because refusing to would upset her and damage the dialogue. However, after this act, he confessed that he prayed to God to forgive him for the act.
New Years' Parties	In 1995, Erdogan commented that New Years celebrations were a habit adopted by secularists, and not a legitimate cause for celebration to him.

Sources: Cakir et.al.(2001), *Hurriyet Newspaper* (10 July 1998).
 Compilation by Seda Demiralp.

Looking back, Erdogan must have thought that the RP may have gone a little too far. He must have concluded that it was time for his party to compromise with the secularist establishment and postpone some of its demands on politically sensitive issues such as rescinding the headscarf ban,ⁱⁱⁱ until the party established a more stable and lasting constituency. As much as he was upset with the ban on women wearing veils in public, trying to change the law and remove the ban had almost led to a coup in 1998, when the National Security Council had presented Erbakan's parliamentary coalition with an ultimatum of conditions they felt would "keep Turkey from going radical." Erbakan immediately resigned, and his party was banned.

Even amidst this drama, there were bigger issues at hand, such as the powerful tension between orthodox versions of Islam, those practiced by many of Erbakan's followers, and Turkey's secular state. The government obviously believed that this political form of Islam was incompatible with Turkey's efforts to modernize and open to the European Union and the world while preserving allegiance to Ataturk's reformist movement in the 1920s. Obviously, they were wrong, but he had to find a way to show them this and without bloodshed and more imprisonments.

What Islam Is and Is Not

The meaning of Islam and its implications for individuals' spirituality as well as for world politics has been controversial in the West, especially since the terrorist attacks of 9/11. Scholars and politicians have suggested that Islam is innately authoritarian, antidemocratic, radical or aggressive. According to these views (by authors including Huntington 1993, Pipes 1995 and Fukuyama 1995), bridging Islam and democracy was useless since the principles of Islam and liberal democracy were at odds. Others have disagreed with these essentialist views,

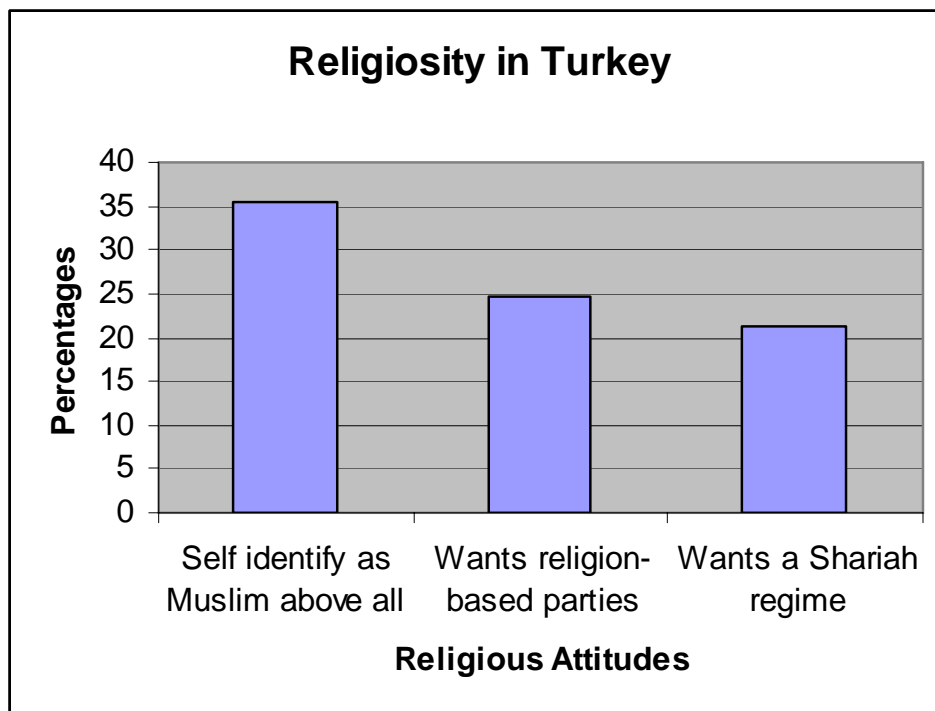
suggesting instead that the lack of democracy in the Muslim world could not be attributed to the essence of Islam. Rather, they argued, other causes were responsible for authoritarian practices in the region, such as: oppressive colonial legacies, extractive economies in some nations dependent on oil, and the existence in several nations of overly powerful militaries and weak civil societies (see for example, see Filali-Ansari 2001, Anderson 1987, Bellin 2004, Przeworski et.al. 2001). Finally others argued that contemporary Islamism was less about religious revivalism than it was about a popular mobilization to destabilize domestic and international power relations. This perspective viewed Islam as a cultural resource that the masses in Middle Eastern societies could use to create bonds of support in order to compete with the established domestic and international elites (Bugra 1998).

Among the believers too, a consensus on the dictates of Islam has been elusive. The meaning of Islamism has always been a personal and relative matter. For conservative practitioners, politics and religion are inseparable; politics is a tool for spreading the faith. Therefore, adherence to Islam implies adoption of traditional *Shari'a* (Qur'anic law) rule, which includes a number of rules, such as praying 5 times a day in scheduled times that includes waking up early for the morning prayer which needs to be observed right before the sunrise, going to Friday prayers in the mosque, fasting 30 days from sunrise to sunset in the holy month of Ramadan, gender segregation in public, the imposition of veils on women, bans on consumption of alcohol, and the legalization of polygamy.

For moderates, Islam concerns internal training and purification of the adherent's self, rather than extending to community governance. In fact, for some Islamists, integration of politics and the faith is off limits as mixing such spiritual and secular issues could contaminate

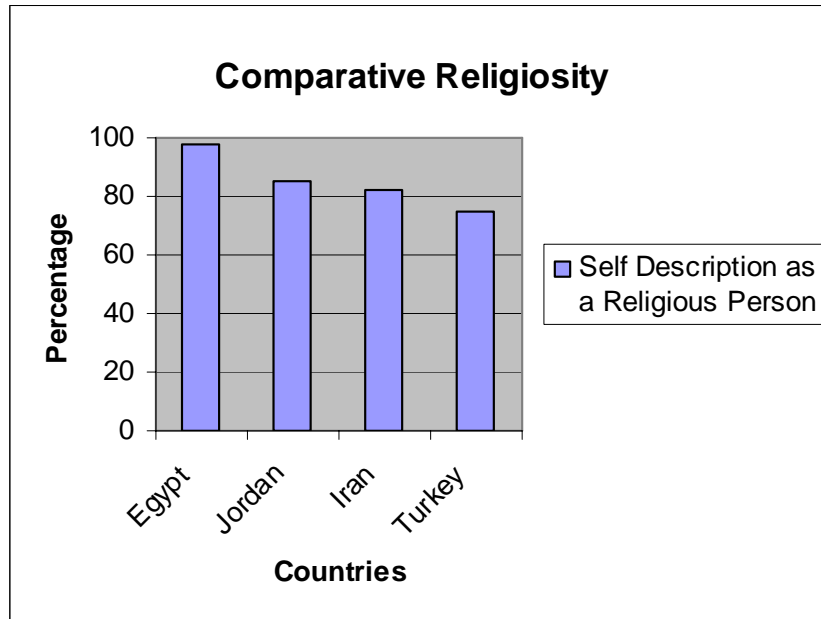
the purity of one's faith. For some, Islamism was rather a tool for resisting Western cultural and economic domination and retaining traditional values and identity (Gulalp 1992, Keyman 1995). In short, the practice of Islam assumes many forms, and the extent of its practices vary greatly within countries, as reflected in figures 1 to 3. These figures give the idea of a wide range of religious practices across the Muslim Middle East, from secular Turkey to Egypt and Jordan, where religion plays a more formal part in social and political life, to Iran, where religion is the foundation of politics. The figures show that despite Western stereotypes to the contrary, the majority of Muslims are extraordinarily religious.

Figure 1:



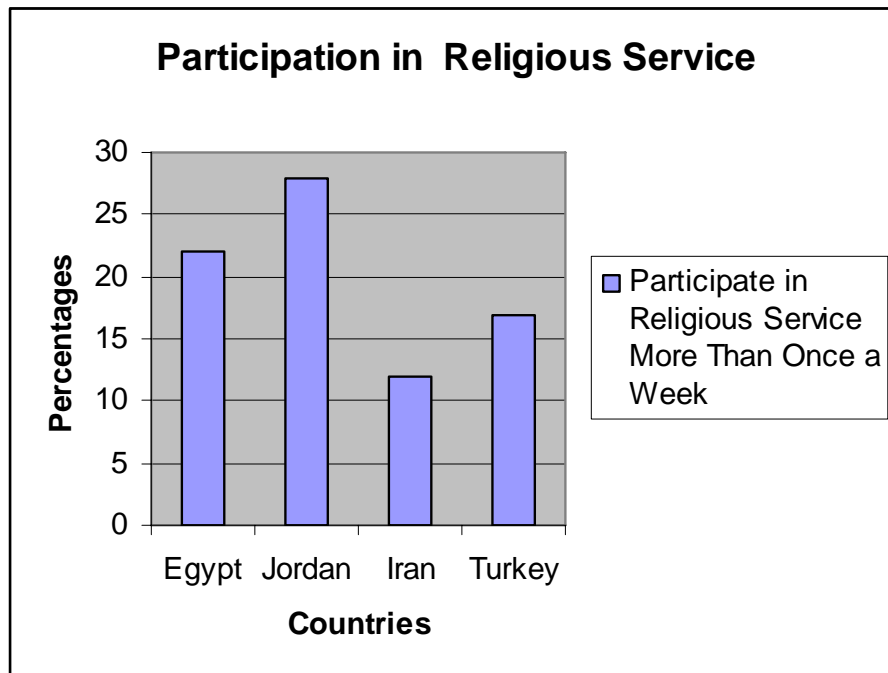
Source: Toprak and Carkoglu (2000).
Compilation by: Seda Demiralp.

Figure 2:



Source: World Values 2000 Data.
Compilation by: Seda Demiralp.

Figure 3:



Source: World Values 2000 Data.
Compilation by: Seda Demiralp

Among these controversies about the true nature of Islam, perhaps the most widely debated concerns the compatibility of Islam and democracy. Some orthodox Islamists have opposed democracy and secularism, finding these to be Western inventions harmful to Islam. These groups suggested that God's rules were superior to human-made laws and therefore viewed any regime besides a theocracy – merging “Church and state together” - as illegitimate. Others argued that 95 percent of the Qur'an was about individual faith, and only 5 percent was about social order, and that even in this 5 percent never suggested a particular regime, but only referred to principles such as justice, equality, piety, and rule of law which were in fact also the very foundations of democracy (see for example Nursi 1995, who leads the Islamic *Nur* movement).

Moderates argue that when Muslims are skeptical about democracy it is not because of inherent contradictions between Islam and democracy, but rather because of historical antipathies (Filali-Ansari 2001). Muslims' encounters with the West have often been controversial for Islamists because of perceptions about the West's imperialist aspirations. The fact that, extending back to the colonial period, Western imperialism often claimed to be “exporting democracy,” even as the United States and European powers exacerbated Muslim disenchantment with Western democracy. Despite these experiences, many Islamic groups have considered themselves ‘Muslim Democrats’ and suggested that the foundations of Islamic and Western worldviews did not really conflict. According to the moderates (see Table 2), Islamic traditions such as *shur'a* (consultation), *ijtihad* (reformist reinterpretation), and *icma* (consensus) demonstrate that true Islam is compatible with democracy (see Abou El Fad'l 2001 and Inayatullah and Boxwell 2003).

Table 2: Islamic Sources of Democracy

Shur'a	Shur'a corresponds to "consultation" and constitutes one of the main principles in the Islamic perspective on socio-political organization. It is central the on-going debate among Muslims over political reform. The principle of <i>shur'a</i> holds that all members of society are equal in human and civil rights and that public issues are best decided by the majority.
Ijtihad	<i>Ijtihad</i> can be translated as "interpretation" or application of the sources of dogma to new areas. The concept refers to interpretation based on logical deduction of a legal or theological question by a <i>Mujtahid</i> (an Islamic scholar). <i>Ijtihad</i> differs from <i>ijma</i> which is the collective opinion of a council of divines. The <i>ijtihad</i> tradition among the Sunni Muslims ended sometime between the Tenth and Twelfth centuries, a turning point in Islamic history referred to as "the closing of the door of <i>ijtihad</i> ." Progressive Muslims find that the <i>ijtihad</i> had been a main tool for political development in the Muslim world, and for the last two centuries they have demanded the "reopening" of the door of <i>ijtihad</i> .
Ijma	<i>Ijma</i> means "consensus of opinion." According to Imam Shafi, <i>ijma</i> is the adherence of the congregation (<i>jama`a</i>) of Muslims to the conclusions of a given ruling regarding what is permitted and what is forbidden after the passing of the Prophet. (Imam Shafi, <i>Risala</i>). <i>Ijma</i> is the third reference after the Qur'an and the Sunnah. When an <i>ijtihad</i> becomes universal it becomes <i>ijma</i> . The <i>ijma'</i> mechanism is also open to the possibility of public deliberation and debate, so that various points of view (individually as well as collectively) get the opportunity to be heard by people who eventually will forge consensus. When the majority decision is achieved, all the members of society – Muslim and non-Muslim - must attempt to implement it. The initiator, adherent or whoever agrees with the minority view, must accept the majority's decision and try to implement it as a consensus. <i>Ijma</i> is interpreted as an anti-authoritarian concept as it encourages believers not to agree on a mistake but object to it if they think an order is mistaken. On the other hand, controversies exist over who can make <i>ijma</i> . While some argue that only Islamic scholars but not the common society can achieve <i>ijma</i> , wider notions suggest that <i>ijma</i> is the consensus of the Muslim society in general.

Source: Compilation by Seda Demiralp.

Muslim democrats have suggested that ideally true democracy and secularism are not supposed to suppress Islam but rather protect it as they would the free practice of any other religion. Proponents of this view further argue that the controversy over contemporary secularism in Turkey and elsewhere, seeking to restrict religion in the public sphere, was not

innate to the Middle East, but rather inherited from French secularism by the modernizing regimes of the Middle East (Toprak and Carkoglu 2000). This authoritarian French-Turkish form of secularism dictates a rigid separation between political and religious lives and suppresses religion in the public life. This situation is related with the history of the two cases where secularism in both France and Turkey has been established through violent struggles to ensure its durability in the face of powerful opposition. For the same reason, Turkey and France are the only countries in the Middle East and Europe that have accepted secularism as a constitutional principle (Citak 2004).

On the other hand, this Franco-Turkish version is not the only interpretation of secularism among contemporary democracies. Another model is the multiculturalist understanding of secularism, as sought by the United States. United States secularism, stemming from that country's constitutional Bill of Rights, is considered milder as it is based on the assurance of freedom for all religious practices, rather than on removing all vestiges of any religion from political life. Thus, some moderate Islamists have ironically started to idealize American secularism as an "export" to the Middle East as a means of reconciling radical Islam with radical secularism.

The Rise of Political Islam as a Reaction Against Modernization

When the Ottoman Empire collapsed in 1923 several nation-states were established in its place in the Middle East and North Africa. The Turkish Revolution abolished the Ottoman sultanate, disregarded the rule of Islamic law over the territory, and established a secular republic. Following this model, Ottoman successors and other early 20th Century Muslim modernizers like Iran, engaged in top down modernization (Gulalp 1992, Arjomand 1986, Gole

1997). These secularist states believed that a main reason for the Ottoman Empire's collapse was religious fundamentalism. Hence, they thought religion should be controlled by the state and if possible, restricted to the private sphere (Yavuz 1999). Yet, policies of these centrist states were mostly limited to urban areas and capitals, and modernization barely penetrated the periphery. A cultural, economic, and political dualism emerged between urban centers and rural peripheries (Mardin 1973). The center of the nation was secularist in political structure, developed in social and economic sense, and in proximity to decision making institutions, while the periphery was religiously conservative, underdeveloped and far from political power. Middle Eastern efforts to create homogenous, unified and "modern" states failed dramatically.

The Middle East's new secular states could not avert the relative "peripheralization" of their countries within the world, just as they could not prevent an internal center-periphery dualism from occurring. Similar to most of the Third World, the problems of development and the inability of the modern nation-state to create national unity and provide citizens with a higher quality of life challenged the legitimacy of the state and gave rise to resistance. The defeat of Egypt and Syria by Israel in 1967 symbolized the nadir of legitimacy of the Islamic Middle East and prompted a search for alternative political strategies. As in other parts of the world, in the Middle East too, leftist movements were highly dominant among resistance movements through the 1970s. Yet, massive state repression and the "foreign" nature of imported leftist ideologies prompted many leftist movements to lose momentum in the 1980s. Politically conservative Islamist groups came to replace the leftist movements as the dominant regime opponents. As an indigenous rather than "imported" political platform, Islam was taken by many to be the true solution to the political, economic and social problems of the Middle East.

Islamist opposition to “modernization” crystallized a significant political movement in the broader Muslim world by 1970s and won its first major battle in Iran. In 1979, the Islamists led by Ayatollah Khomeini overthrew the Westernist rule of Shah Reza Pahlevi and established an Islamic regime. Antagonism to the Shah’s West-dependent authoritarian modernization was so powerful and the opposition movement was so popular that even communist women – who were presumed to be secular consistent with the doctrine - veiled voluntarily to protest the authoritarian policies of the Shah. In Iran and beyond, Islamism promised salvation to the people who had been left behind in the modernization of the Middle East (Arjomand 2002). After the Iranian revolution, Islamism became the biggest threat to political stability in the Muslim world, as the “Iranian example” became the nightmare of many policy makers in the Middle East. An Islamic state was the anti-utopia for the authoritarian modernist states such as Turkey, and had to be avoided at any cost. These modernist governments banned Islamist parties, imprisoned Islamist activists, and dissolved Islamist associations. Political participation of the Islamists in formal politics was severely restricted (see Table 3 for the reach of Islamic law in the Muslim world).

Table 3: Shariah’s Reach: Islamic law based on Koran is applied in broadly different ways across the Islamic world.

Religious States or Regions Within States		
Iran	Legal Codes: Stoning to death is prescribed for offenses (including adultery and prostitution). The penal code includes these specifications: “The stones should not be too large so that the person dies on being hit by one or two of them; they should not be so small either that they could not be defined as stones.”	Enforcement: How it Works Sentences of Death by stoning may include a prison term first, or lashings or both. A moratorium on stoning was issued in 2002, but sentences continued to be handed out. Recent Cases: 2001 Two women were known to have been stoned to death, including one after serving eight years in prison who was convicted of

	<p>Regulations updated in 2003 specify that flogging is to be carried out with leather cords 1.5cm thick and 1 meter long.</p>	<p>adultery and “corruption on earth.” Two others were reportedly sentenced to death by stoning; it is known if the sentences were carried out. At least 285 people were flogged, many in public.</p> <p>2002 At least three were reported sentenced to death by stoning. Amnesty International recorded 9 amputations as punishments, including one cross amputation (for example, a right hand and left foot).</p> <p>2003 An Iranian newspaper reported the sentencing of a man to 80 lashes and 10 years of imprisonment, to be followed by execution by stoning for running a brothel. Another man was flogged with 80 lashes and died 4 days after conviction on charges including possession of a medicine containing alcohol, consuming alcohol in the early 1980s, possession of a satellite dish and aiding his sister’s “corruption” in having boyfriends.</p>
<p>Nigeria</p>	<p>The 1959 code allowed for limited Shariah law in northern Muslim areas but prohibited sentences of stoning and amputation. After civilian rule resumed in 1999, 12 states adopted new Shariah codes, resuming those punishments.</p>	<p>How It Works: The new codes added specific punishments: for theft, amputation of the hand; for drinking alcohol; flogging; for adultery, death by stoning.</p> <p>Recent Cases:</p> <p>2001 Bariya Ibrahima Magazu, a street hawker believed to be 17 or younger, received 100 lashes in January at the Higher Shariah Court in Tsafe in front dozens of her neighbors. She had been sentenced to 100 lashes for having sexual relations outside marriage and 80 lashes for falsely accusing three men of coercing her into having sex.</p> <p>Safiya Yakubu Hussaini Tunga-Tudu, a 35 year-old mother of five, was sentenced to death in Sokoto on charges of adultery. The case provoked international outrage; she was acquitted in 2002.</p> <p>2002 Dozens were sentenced to have their hands amputated for theft or armed robbery and to flogging for fornication, consumption of alcohol and other crimes.</p> <p>Amina Lawal, 35, was sentenced to death by stoning for adultery, after bearing a child</p>

		<p>outside marriage, which was sufficient evidence for her to be convicted under new Shariah penal laws in Katsina state. She appealed, and won in 2003.</p> <p>2003 Jibrin Babaji was sentenced to death by stoning by a Shariah court after being convicted of sodomy involving three minors.</p>
<p>Saudi Arabia</p>	<p>Flogging is mandatory for sexual offenses and other crimes, and can be used as an alternative or addition to other punishments. Sentences can range from dozens to thousands of lashes. Amputation of the hand or foot is imposed for theft and burglary; highway robbery is punished by cross amputation.</p>	<p>How It Works: Amputations are imposed after what Amnesty International calls “grossly unfair trials.” Floggings may be given by police immediately after catching offenders; they are often public.</p> <p>Recent Cases:</p> <p>1981-1999 Amnesty International reports at least 90 cases of amputations. An Egyptian convicted of robbery was sentenced to 4,000 lashes in 1990, reportedly administered 50 lashes at a time every two weeks.</p> <p>2000 There were 34 reported cases of amputations, including seven cross amputations. Two teachers, arrested following demonstrations, were reported to have been sentenced to 1,500 lashes each to be carried out in front of their families, students and other teachers.</p> <p>2001 Hundreds of teenagers were flogged where alleged offenses had taken place, some in a shopping mall. A military officer was given 20 lashes for using a mobile phone while on a Saudi Arabian Airlines flight. Three men were sentenced to 1,500 lashes each, in addition to 15 years imprisonment on drug charges. Four others tried with them were sentenced to death and executed.</p> <p>2002 Scores of teenage boys were reported flogged during the year. A woman was sentenced to 65 lashes and six months’ imprisonment for committing adultery with her sister’s husband, even though she reportedly claimed that he had raped her. The man was sentenced to 4,700 lashes and six years’ imprisonment. At least seven people, all foreign nationals, had their right hands amputated.</p>

Moderate States		
Indonesia	This culturally diverse archipelago, 88 percent Muslim, guarantees freedom of religion and recognizes five religions. It also allows some localities to carry out Shariah.	How It Works: The first Shariah court was established in Aceh province, applicable only to Muslims. Women there were lectured on inappropriate dress and briefly detained. In other places, civil servants have been required to wear Islamic clothing on Fridays and attend noon prayers. Other areas forbade alcohol, but ban applied only to Muslims and was not strictly enforced. Some political parties have advocated Shariah nationwide, they remain in the minority.
Secular State		
Turkey	The constitution protects freedom of religion. The government oversees the country's 75,000 mosques and other religious facilities.	How It Works: The military, judiciary and other branches of government discriminate against those they consider proponents of Islamic fundamentalism and Shariah. Observant Muslims in the military are reported to be expelled as threats to secularism; civil servants suspected of Islamic activities are not promoted or are fired. Bans on Islamic headscarves at universities and among civil servants are enforced.

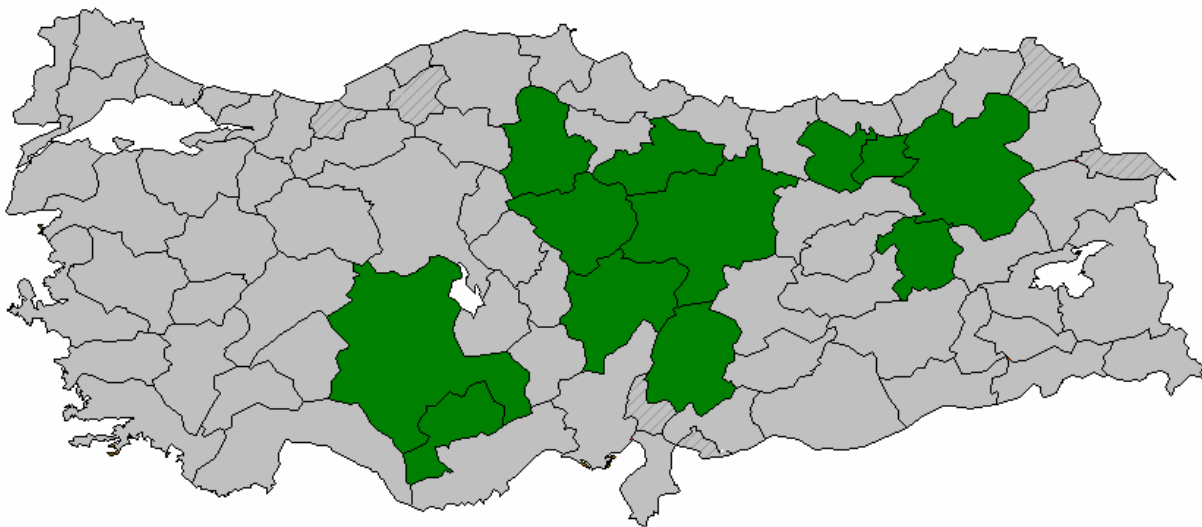
Source: Rohde (*NY Times* 13 March 2005).

On the other hand, Islamists skillfully expanded their power within the civil sphere, mainly by circumventing restrictions posed by the rules of formal politics and forming informal networks (Singerman 1995). They provided education centers, dormitories, shelters, and health clinics, as alternatives to state social services, even as they were forced not to participate as formal parties. Popular support for the Islamists increased over time, and made them eventually the most powerful opposition to state authority in several nations. Secular Turkey was no exception. Despite a number of disadvantages, Islamists in Turkey rapidly produced their own economic and political counter-elites. Thanks to their well-developed networks, Islamist industrialists became powerful actors in the 1990s, challenging the domination of the secularist

middle classes which had developed earlier under state protection. Their rising popular and economic power finally enabled Turkish Islamists to propel their movement into formal politics – previously “off limits” to religion-driven political movements. Turkish Islamists emerged as a significant electoral opposition in 1991 and grew into Turkey’s dominant electoral force by 2002 (see Figure 4).

Figure 4:

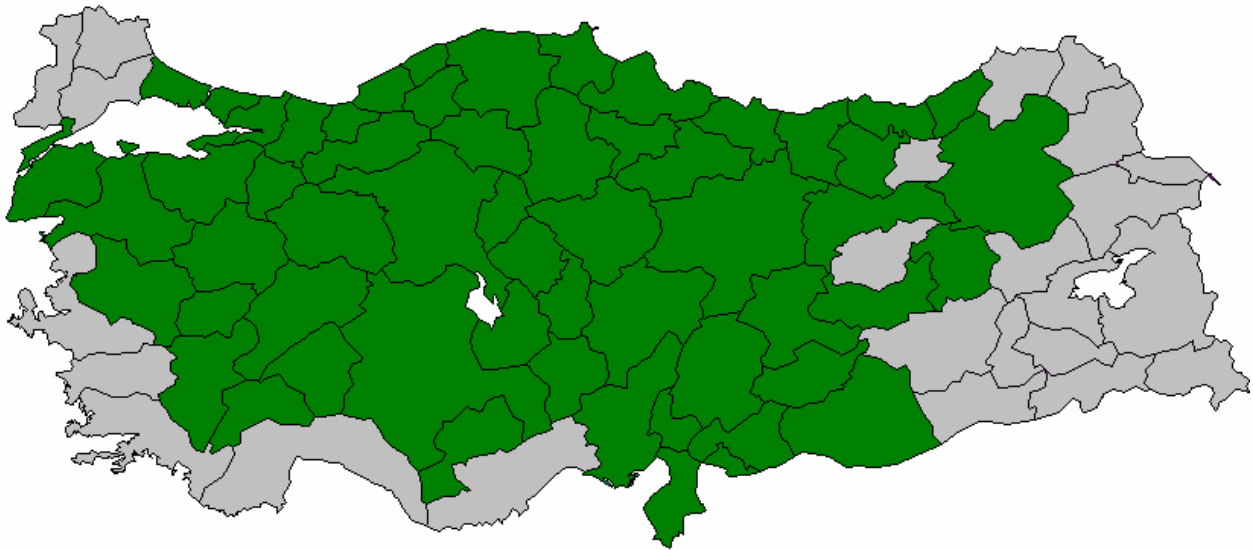
1991 General Elections
The Distribution of Islamist RP Votes: The green areas are the electoral districts where the Islamist RP won the highest number of votes.



Source: For elections results see www.e-harita.gen.tr
Maps created by: Seda Demiralp

2002 General Elections

The Distribution of Neo-Islamist AKP Votes: The green areas reflect the electoral districts where the AKP won the highest number of votes



Source: For elections results see www.e-harita.gen.tr

Maps created by: Seda Demiralp

The rise of Islamic fundamentalism created a greater resentment in Turkey than anywhere else in the Muslim world, given the powerful roots there of secularist institutions. The predominantly Muslim but secularist Turkish state considered Islamism the biggest threat to the secularist establishment. Backed by the military, secularism had been a pillar of the regime and had to be protected at all costs against theocratic threats. Islamist parties such as the National Order Party (MNP), National Salvation Party (MSP), Prosperity Party (RP), and finally, the Virtue Party (FP), were all banned for their anti-secularist agendas and activism. Ultimately, ruling elites who legitimized their authority by promising development and democratization ironically ended up restricting Islamist political participation in the name of democracy. They argued that democracy required time to consolidate, and that pre-maturely opening the political system to anti-democratic actors, such as the Islamists, might lead to disaster.

Secularism and Islamic Reaction in Turkey

The 1919-1920 Independence War, which Ataturk won against the World War I Allied Powers of Western Europe and the United States, allowed him to disband the Ottoman Empire. But an equally critical challenge –even then - was to purge the new Turkish state of internal enemies such as ethnic separatists and religious fundamentalists, who were thought to be pulling the nation backwards. To these ends, Ataturk abolished the sultanate and the Islamic caliphate and sought to unite all ethno-religious groups such as the Turks, Kurds, Jews, Greek Orthodox and Catholic Armenians, which had enjoyed self-government and freedom (called *millet system*) during the Ottoman Empire, under the remote umbrella of Turkish nationalism (Kilic 1998).

Ataturk's reforms faced great resistance. The massive Sheik Said Rebellion in 1925 – led by Kurdish separatists and Islamic fundamentalists - activated these two groups as fault lines in the consolidating nation-state, and they continued to be sources of instability for the next 80 years (Kirisci 1997). For many Kurds, whose main reason to obey the Ottoman sultan caliph was his religious authority, there was no reason left to remain connected to the new secularist central state of Ataturk after he abolished the caliphate in 1924. Repressing this rebellion cost 10,000 casualties on both sides over five months of armed conflict, and the execution of hundreds more after the *Istiklal Court*, that was a temporary court, designed particularly to fight regime opponents, put Said's followers to death (Aybars 1995). Since then, tensions between radical Islamists and the military have not overwhelmed existing institutional frameworks, as the Islamists typically desisted when tension escalated and then re-entered politics when conditions were more propitious for them. In 2001, however, a radical change broke this 80-year-old stalemate. The rebellion by Said, a prominent Kurd and also an Islamic Sheik (or “master”) who

reacted against the abolition of the caliphate in the southeastern Kurdish city of Diyarbakir, symbolized the fusion of Kurdish separatists and the Islamist fundamentalists. These two groups continued to confront the new regime over the next 80 years via protests and insurgencies which cost over 30,000 lives (especially in the military's repression of the Kurdish terrorist movement of the PKK, Kurdistan Workers Party).

The intensity of struggles to purge Turkey of Kurds and Islamists diminished in the late 1990s when the Kurdish and Islamist movements moderated, giving them credibility in the international arena and helping their "boomerang strategy" of mobilizing supranational actors to pressure the state from outside to repeal domestic restrictions on political opposition (Sikkink and Keck 1998). This strategy gained momentum in 1999 when Turkey was granted an official candidacy for membership to the European Union at its Helsinki summit – to a powerful and exclusive supranational economic (and increasingly political and diplomatic) institution - over a decade after Turkey's 1987 application for membership. EU membership held out promise to Turkey's repressed groups that the government might be pressured to pluralize if they wanted to join. The EU, which many in Turkey, a 98-percent-Muslim society, had viewed as a "Christian Club," generated a coalition of support nationwide unparalleled since the Turkish War for Independence in 1919. The first beneficiary of this "boomerang" strategy related to EU ascension was the Kurds, whose international lobbying activities enabled a series of constitutional changes in Turkey broadening Kurds' cultural rights.^{iv} This success was a model for the Islamists, encouraging them to pursue a similar path of democratization over militant opposition, and lobby international sympathizers to pressure the state to open up to Islamist demands.^v Islamists slowly adapted from a strong anti-West/anti-EU platform to a moderate and eventually a pro-EU position.

A Hypothetical General Develops His Anti-Islamist Argument

Retired general Eser Sadik^{vi} read the news of Erdogan's imprisonment with great interest. A fervid Kemalist (follower of Ataturk) and Turkish nationalist, he believed that the military was still the same force of patriotic liberators who, led by Ataturk, established modern, secular Turkey. This proud military had sworn loyalty to Ataturk's principles as long as the Turkish Republic persisted. Sadik frequently reminded himself of Ataturk's warnings about how internal enemies, such as the Islamists, could prove just as dangerous to the stability of the republic as the external enemies they had defeated so valiantly.

"They speak your language, and say they are of 'the people,' but the fact is that they are the worst enemies of the nation," he thought. "They abuse popular sensitivities to challenge the accomplishments of Ataturk's revolution. They talk about God, and cite the Qur'an, and people follow them as if they were hypnotized. People just do not know what is good for them. We have to protect them from themselves. Didn't they know what the revolution had given them? Couldn't they see where Turkey would be without that glorious moment in 1923? It would be another Third World backwater overrun by economic backwardness, religious dogma, and ethnic conflict."

"All one had to do was to look at Turkey's neighbors! Would these ignorant people who vote for the Islamists want to suffer the unrest of Iraq, Iran or Syria?" Sadik thought of yesterday's protest of veiled students, whining that religious freedom did not exist in Turkey. They made him so angry. "The military is not against religion," he muttered to himself. His grandmother wore a headscarf too. But hers was not the headscarf these crazy girls were wearing. Hers was folkloric. But these girls, who think of themselves as martyrs like Joan of

Arc! Their headscarves were clearly not an innocent adornment but rather symbols of religious fundamentalism, of anti-secularism...of a willingness to overthrow the regime – all he had worked for - if they could...and install a backward theocratic regime like Iran's...

“No, Turkey would not be Iran, or Algeria...as long as Turkey still had Ataturk's military, an army that had defeated the Allied powers, with no money, and no expensive weapons; just sheer will. And no one, not these ignorant girls who didn't know what they were doing, nor the men who pushed them into these protests, would be able to challenge secularism...”

Instinctively, Sadik also knew that simple force was not going to solve the problem. “The more we push, the more radical they get,” he thought. The solution had to come from within. From someone these rebels would listen to. When he suggested this to some of his colleagues, they bristled. Would he have the military “bargain” with the fundamentalists? How would that affect the military's image? This could not even be an option!

General Sadik was not entirely convinced by his colleagues' opposition. Negotiating with the radicals was an option, and perhaps the only option. . . ‘Divide and conquer’ was a time-tested strategy. He decided to meet Erdogan... If there was anyone who could beat Erbakan, it was Erdogan, one of them, who even the fundamentalists adored...Erdogan had been the right hand of Necmettin Erbakan, the most powerful figure of the Islamist movement, until personal tensions between them boiled over. To Sadik and other analysts, it appeared that Erbakan feared being eclipsed politically by Erdogan's rising star.

Erdogan was destined to be the new leader of the moderate Islamists, not because of the “education” prison provides about moderating utopian ideals, but because of his political ambitions. He was not satisfied being Erbakan’s right-hand. He was young, charismatic, and ambitious. Erdogan wanted more power, which would make him willing to compromise along the way. Sadik grabbed his phone to make the important phone call.^{vii}

The Case for Traditional, “Radical” Islamists

Necmettin Erbakan was the ubiquitous leader of the Islamist movement in Turkey. Born in 1926 in Sinop, son of a *kadi* (Muslim judge), Erbakan was an early Islamic activist. He studied mechanical engineering at Istanbul Technical University, where he received his Ph.D and joined the faculty in 1962. He soon launched a business career and became the chair of Turkish Union of Chambers of Commerce and Industry and Bourses (stock traders). In 1970 he established the Islamist National Order Party (MNP), but MNP was banned by the Constitutional Court, and in 1972 Erbakan established another Islamist party, the National Salvation Party (MSP). When the army in 1980 abolished all political parties, the MSP was banned too and Erbakan and other party leaders went to prison. When civilian political parties were again tolerated, as of 1983, Erbakan established the Prosperity Party (RP). The RP actually achieved popularity in 1991 parliamentary contests, 1994 local elections, and again in the 1995 parliamentary elections (see Table 5). The party formed the national government in 1996 after joining a coalition with the center-right True Path Party (DYP). However, in February 1997, the military warned the RP-led government to desist from anti-secularist activities. In response to these threats, the RP resigned from government, and in 1998, the Constitutional Court banned

the RP. Subsequently, Erbakan and his Islamist followers established yet another Islamist party, the Virtue Party (FP).

Table 4: Post-1970 Islamist Parties and Policies on European Union Membership

Party	Leader	Year Founded	Year Banned	EU Policy
National Order Party (MNP)	Erbakan	1970	1971	Anti-EU
National Salvation Party (MSP)	Erbakan	1971	1980	Anti-EU
Welfare Party (RP)	Erbakan	1983	1998	Anti-EU
Virtue Party (FP)	Kutan*	1998	2001	Neutral to pro-EU
Felicity Party (SP)	Kutan	2001	-	Neutral to pro-EU
Justice and Development Party (AKP)	Erdogan	2001	-	Pro-EU

Source: Taniyici (2003).

*Even though Kutan, a close friend of Erbakan, was the nominal leader of the VP, and then the SP, the genuine leadership still belonged to Erbakan, who could not lead the party because of his ban on political activism.

Erbakan’s movement had evolved an ideology, the Islamic *National View*, which had rallied masses since the 1970s around the idea of rejecting secular Westernization and reclaiming the 624-year-old Islamic Turkish-Ottoman identity, abandoned by Ataturk’s secularization reforms in 1924. Erbakan claimed that Turks could regain their pride, lost in defeat in World War I, only by returning to the golden age of the Islamic-Ottoman past. The *National View* suggested that Turkey should stop trying to be part of the West, which was useless anyway, as the West was a “Christian Club” which historically colonized the Middle East, looked down upon Turkey, and would never accept Turkey as an equal partner. The future of Turkey and the

larger Muslim world depended, according to the *National View*, on its ability to recreate a pan-Islamist unity, retain a singular cultural-religious identity, and find an indigenous path of development. This, for the Erbakan and his followers, was the only way the Muslim World could regain its glory and compete with the Western civilization (Dagi 1998). Hence, Erbakan promised to end Turkey's close cooperation with the West in economic and security issues, and utilize Turkey's might in the service of an Islamic NATO or an Islamic Economic Union (Barkey 1996). This view was not only an outcome of religious orientation but also an extension of the belief that the developing Turkish economy can better compete in the not-so-developed markets of the Muslim world, but would be beaten up in the post-industrial market of the West.

In addition to the alternative economic path it suggested, Erbakan's movement also became the vehicle through which the pious articulated their unhappiness with the strict application of secularist principles. These people, mostly rural dwellers and migrants to the cities from the countryside, could not be integrated into Westernized urban life and desperately sought an alternative political "elite" to look up to. Erbakan's Islamist movement mobilized these people, who felt isolated and outside of the economic, political and cultural mainstream, and helped them believe they could alter their alienation and sense of social inferiority if Islamic reforms could be allowed to succeed.

As in the secularist movement of Mustafa Kemal and in the Islamizing movement of Erbakan, women's bodies – and more specifically whether they were veiled - played an important symbolic role. In both the secularization of Turkey in the 1920s and the re-Islamization movement in the 1990s, these women's rights issues carried great symbolic weight. Indeed, whether women should be allowed to expose their unveiled faces and heads in public

became the central outward expression of the secular (“unveiling”) and Islamist (“veiling”) movements. How women were viewed in public life, unveiled (as mandated after the Kemalist reforms of the 1920s), or veiled (as per Islamists’ efforts in the late 20th and early 21st centuries to rollback earlier liberalization), defined the degree of intervention of religious values in social and political life (Gole 1997: 51). While banning the Islamic headscarf in universities and public offices (where 76.7 percent of women wore headscarves according to Toprak and Carkoglu’s 2000 survey) was a prime manifestation of secularization in the post-World War I Kemalist movement, women’s headscarves became the banner of Erbakan’s re-Islamization movement. In this context, Erbakan made an unfortunate speech before the 1995 elections (which played a role in the Constitutional Court’s barring of his party in 1998) promising that university deans who denied entrance of veiled students to universities would have to salute veiled students when his party came to power.

The success of Erbakan’s movement was based in part on its ability to generate locally-based mobilizations as contrasted with the centrist policies of older parties such as the Atatürkist Republican Peoples Party (CHP) and the Democratic Left Party (DSP), which were sometimes out of touch. Erbakan’s Prosperity Party did a good job of building a nationwide grassroots party organization. This strategy also enabled Erbakan’s *National View* movement to supercede limitations by the central state which made its participation in parliamentary politics difficult. Bypassing the national legislative branch, the movement instead gained influence by winning municipal governments and challenging central government from the regions.^{viii} The local cadres of the party worked their districts door to door, offering goods and services (ranging from food to money or to free student dorms or shelters), establishing direct contact with potential voters including those at the very bottom of the economic ladder who had been largely ignored

by the mainstream parties, and making sure that local party members regularly attended social events such as weddings, funerals and other societal rituals (Barkey 1996, White 2002). These intense mobilization efforts unsurprisingly worked out and in the 1990s, the *National Vision* movement won mayoral races in Turkey's most populous cities - Istanbul (9.1 million), Ankara (3.7 million), and Izmir (population 3.2 million) – which were also most representative of the Western face of modern Turkey. Among the RP's mayors, Tayyip Erdogan came to play a particularly important role in the party. Erdogan was one of the favored disciples of Erbakan, and a modern reformer who contributed greatly to the reputation and popularity of the RP by administering Istanbul successfully and providing solutions to many important problems of the large city, including pollution, water, and transportation (Cakir et.al.2001).

Erdogan's decision to name his son after Erbakan demonstrated Erdogan's reciprocal loyalty to his political patron. However, fears that the disciple might seek to eclipse his patron proved justified when Erdogan started criticizing the party leadership for its declining vote share in the late 1990s. For Erdogan, the hierarchical and paternalistic relationship between the party leadership and base did not help the party remain sensitive to its supporters (Akus 2001). Many party members had shown discomfort with some of Erbakan's radical acts or speeches that triggered reaction among secularist groups (such as the military or other political parties) who eventually cooperated to eradicate the RP from political life. Yet, Erbakan did not sufficiently heed these critics. Upon Erdogan's release from prison, Erbakan's side of the party warned party faithful not to exalt his confidant-turned-challenger's return to civilian life, as some rightly feared Erdogan's new confidence might threaten the balance of power within the Islamist movement (Milliyet 20 July 1999).

Prisoner Erdogan's Dilemma

Prisoner Erdogan had a lot of time to think in 1999 about these Pan-Islamist movements and their success in neighboring states, about Turkey's unique history and how it made the plight of his party all the more dire, and about how to adapt for the future. What strategies would he conceive of? How could he be loyal to his Islamist beliefs and support base within Turkey's broader context of vehement secularism? How could his government (and the military behind it) be persuaded to stop persecuting Islamists and Kurds, and live with religious pluralism (as was practiced in the US, for example), rather than repressing peoples' freedoms? Should the RP bear down and oppose the government's oppressive policies, or moderate, and find a way to defuse the animosities of the government and military against his followers? How could international actors be made sympathetic to his cause? Most importantly, how could he attend to the affairs of his nation while sitting in an isolated prison cell?

Is Erdogan going to be able to convince Erbakan and the rest of the party elite to pursue a more moderate path?

Are Erdogan's reformist thoughts going to appeal to the party base and the traditional voters of the party, or are they going to reject Erdogan's change?

Is Erdogan going to retain or increase his popularity that he had obtained during his mayorship when he is released? Or, is his public popularity going to decline as a result of this new moderate face?

Is Erbakan going to be able to suppress Erdogan's reformist moves, and reestablish his dominance over the party?

Are Erdogan's reformist attempts going to find support among the wider segments of the population, other than the Islamists? How are the secularists going to feel about Erdogan's maneuver?

Moderation in Political Islam: Updating the Case

When the Constitutional Court banned the Virtue Party in 2001, the Islamists unexpectedly split into two groups, the radicals and the moderates. While the old VP members immediately reopened the party under a new name - Felicity Party (FP) - this time the moderates decided not join them but rather establish their own party. Surprisingly, Tayyip Erdogan, the ex mayor of Istanbul who had served the Islamist party for more than ten years and been the heir apparent of the radicals turned out to be the divisive leader who split the party by mobilizing the moderate fraction. Not long after serving four months in prison for "inciting religion-centric hatred among the public" Erdogan and his supporters broke away from the radicals to establish the Justice and Development Party (AKP) in 2001. Erbakan, the traditional leader of the radical party, accused Erdogan of betrayal and denounced all party members who joined his erstwhile ally and the AKP.

Erdogan announced that his party was not going to be an "Islamist" party, and that the party members were simply "Muslim Democrats." The AKP elite declared that on the split between church and state, the AKP would be more moderate; akin to the Christian Democrats in Germany or Christian Right in the United States (Cakir et.al. 2001, Selim 2002, Yarasir et.al. 2002). In contrast to the anti-West policies pursued by the previous Islamist party tradition, the AKP announced that its main political agenda would be to seek EU membership (Taspinar 2004, Zaman 2000). While the previous parties from which the AKP was descended claimed that

democracy could only be a vehicle to mobilize public support and bring about transformation to an Islamic regime, the AKP elite argued that they believed in democracy as an end in itself and that they did not intend to change Turkey's liberal secularist regime. Rather, the AKP leadership stated that they only sought to further democratize a system that embraced a more liberal understanding of secularism (Cakir et.al. 2001, Selim 2002).

The AKP gained an unusual victory in the 2002 elections (see Figure 4 and Table 5 for vote distributions). Thanks to its moderate discourse, the AKP not only avoided the institutional barriers the previous Islamist parties faced but also gained such a high percentage of votes that it was able to rule with a significant majority in parliament which no other Islamist or secularist party had been able to do for fifteen years. Erdogan and his party won 34 percent of the votes, which – by Turkey's formula for transferring votes to seats – translated into three quarters of the seats in parliament. Erbakan's radical party suffered a heavy loss and was shut out of parliament, along with most of Turkey's other parties. However, Erdogan could not initially become prime minister, despite his role at the pinnacle of leadership in the governing party, as he had been banned by the Constitutional Court from ever again holding elected office. The AKP government did change the law, however, so that when special elections in the southeastern city of Siirt (where Erdogan had read the poem which eventually led to his imprisonment) were convened on March 9, 2003, because of some previous vote miscounts, Erdogan ran for parliament, won, and took over the prime ministry from Abdullah Gul.

This sudden and dramatic rise of the AKP scared some of the secularists who feared that the AKP might have a hidden theocratic agenda that it could pursue upon controlling parliament. Yet, some three years into its government, the AKP has not moved away from the moderate path

which enabled the party to expand its support base dramatically. In fact Erdogan has passed several democratic reforms such as: limiting the political powers of the military, passing a law giving the EU Court of Human Rights supremacy over Turkish courts, diminishing the powers of the Anti-Terror Law which had constrained Turkey's democratization, and passing a partial amnesty to reduce penalties faced by many members of the Kurdish terrorist organization PKK who surrendered to the government. These reforms were important steps towards EU membership which would undoubtedly have faced resistance from Islamist voters if Erdogan had not been behind these initiatives. In other words, thanks to his political capital in the eyes of the Islamist voters, his prime ministry enabled the state to subdue and channel the radical demands of Islamist voters. The most dramatic example of this moderating impact of Erdogan's government has been the decline in the magnitude and severity of pro-veil and anti-Iraqi war protests by Islamist groups. These despite the fact that Erdogan has not yet taken any significant steps yet to remove the ban on the veil; nor did he take an anti-Iraq War position. Despite the fears of some secularists that Erdogan's government might encourage anti-secularist movements, it has turned out, ironically, that Erdogan has had a moderate influence on the Islamists. Since 2002, the AKP's popularity has only increased, mostly, perhaps, because of Turkey's economic growth and stability, and the progress in Turkey's bid for EU membership. In the 2004 municipal elections, support for the AKP increased to 47 percent (see Table 5).

Table 5: Vote Shares in Turkish Parliamentary and Local Elections Since 1990

Party	Ideology	1991 Parlia- mentary	1994 local	1995 Parlia- mentary	1999 local	1999 Parlia- mentary	2002 Parlia- mentary	2004 local
Motherland Party (ANAP)	center-right	24.0	21.0	19.7	15.0	13.2	5.12	2.97
True Path Party (TPP)	right	27.0	21.4	19.2	13.2	12.0	9.55	9.47
Republican Peoples Party (CHP)	center-left	-	4.6	10.7	11.1	-	19.4	20.87
Democratic Left Party (DSP)	Left	10.8	8.8	14.6	18.7	22.2	1.23	1.95
Welfare Party (RP), renamed the Virtue Party (VP) in 1999	ultra-right (Islamist)	16.9	19.1	21.4	16.5	15.4	-	-
Felicity Party (SP)	ultra-right (Islamist)	-	-	-	-	-	2.49	4.80
Justice and Development Party (AKP)	center-right (neo-Islamic)	-	-	-	-	-	34.26	40.12
Peoples Democratic Party (HADEP), renamed the Democratic Peoples Party (DEHAP) in 2002	Far left (Kurdish nationalist)	-	-	4.17	3.37	4.7	6.23	**5.15
National Action Party (MHP)	ultra right (nationalist)	-	8.0	8.2	17.2	18.0	8.34	15.28
other						8.7	8.4	2.57

*In 1985 HP merged with SODEP to form the Social Democratic Populist Party (SHP)

** DEHAP entered the 2004 elections in alliance with the SHP (previous SODEP).

Sources:

1989-1999: Taniyici (2003) and Turkish Grand National Assembly web page:

http://www.tbmm.gov.tr/develop/owa/secim_sorgu.genel_secimler.

2002 parliamentary elections: www.secimsonucu.com

2004 local elections: <http://www.yerelnet.org.tr/secimler/>

Moderation of Political Islam in Turkey and Beyond

The moderation of Islamists seems to have started in Turkey – rather than elsewhere in the Middle East - for two reasons. First, the secularist institutions in Turkey were sufficiently consolidated that a revolutionary Iran-like counter-movement was unlikely. Second, democratic institutions were also more consolidated in Turkey than in Egypt, Algeria, or Tunisia (other nations facing strong Islamist challenges), ensuring the Islamists guaranteed survival within the system (they believed), even without toppling the secular regime and replacing it with an Islamic one, as per the Iranian model.

The strength of Turkey's political institutions were critical as a chip in the Accession Partnership negotiations between Turkey and the European Union, and the prospect of “locking in” democratic reforms –and weakening the “wild card” military's ability to intervene - furthered Islamist hopes for pluralist democracy. Regarding EU membership, the Islamists agreed with the secularists that a peaceful, democratic Turkey was more likely to gain entry. However, setbacks to the European Constitution resulting from “no” votes by France and The Netherlands in the late spring of 2005 cast some doubt on further EU expansion and deepening and, by extension, Turkey's role in any possible further expansion.

Because of the international stigma associated with domestic strife, and because they had “played out” the domestic social movement role, Islamists came to believe that overthrowing the regime in favor of Islamist rule was no longer essential for achieving the redistribution of political power. Calling themselves the Muslim Democrats, these moderates sought to show

outsiders that Islam and democracy were compatible and that practicing Muslims could benefit from a pluralist regime.¹

Optimistic secularists welcomed this moderation and viewed it as the ultimate victory of modern secularist ideology. On the other hand, skeptics alleged that the so-called moderates were really the same old fundamentalist Islamists, masking their true identities. On the other hand, the West welcomed the rise of a party bridging Islam and democracy, viewing Turkish moderate Islam as a model that could be exported to other Muslim states to supplant Islamic radicalism. The rise of a moderate Islamist movement particularly impressed the United States, which had been facing difficult challenges since 9/11 regarding how to wage the war on terrorism while still maintaining positive relations with Muslim states. The moderate Islamists suggested that an invaluable solution for the new US policies towards the Muslim world might entail helping moderates assume power and control violent radicalism.

Other moderate Islamist parties, such as the Egyptian Wasat Party, the Khatemi government in Iran, and the Jordanian Muslim Brothers, confirmed that Islamists can moderate when constrained by mainstream political institutions, and when, at the same time, they can emerge without having to fight to capture government through radical means. In these cases, a controlled participatory experience helped the Islamists pursue their interests within the system. Indeed, the Jordanian state tolerated the Muslim Brothers and included them- albeit indirectly- in decision-making, thereby preventing their radicalization (Wictorowicz 2001). Similarly, following a participatory experience in professional associations in the 1990s, the Egyptian Wasat Party started to moderate and even allied with the Copts, the Christian minority in Egypt

¹ The “Muslim Democrats” rejected being called “moderate Islamists,” claiming that this expression suggests a division in Islam, which they disavowed, and that they were Muslims, but not Islamists, meaning Islam is about their faith but not their political ideology.

(Wickham 2004). The moderating impact of political stakes-holding was even evident in Iran, considered the most extremist Islamist regime, even two decades after the nation's revolution. President Mohammed Khatemi, who served first as a parliament member and minister, later became the very leader of the moderate Islamist movement there. Contrary to Egypt, Jordan and Iran, in cases where harsh state repression and exclusion left Islamists no option for survival other than through illegal and violent means, Islamists railed against the system. The most tragic example is Algeria, where following the brutal military intervention against the electoral success of the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS), which avoided political violence until that moment, joined the Armed Islamic Group (GIA) and participated in its terrorist attacks.

Moderate Islam in the post-9/11 World

The rise of the AKP has been sensational, not only in Turkish and regional politics but also in the West. Despite the strongly rooted secularist regime, the AKP government made Turkey the only contemporary example today in the Sunni world with a ruling party which originated in a fundamentalist Islamist tradition, yet can make a legitimate claim to be operating within a secularist democratic framework. For this reason, the rise of the AKP bridging Islam and democracy also excited the West as a model for possible export to other Muslim countries.

The rise of a moderate movement among the Islamists in Turkey taught that democracy would have a chance, even in Muslim nations. The strategic moderation of Turkish Islamists showed that Islamist actors are no different than other political actors. They respond to political opportunities and avoid excessive costs. When opportunities exist for moderate actors to survive and pursue their essential interests from within the secular system while radicals are persistently restricted, radicals become moderates. Mainly in Turkey, but to a more limited extent also in

Jordan, Egypt, and Indonesia, moderates emerged among Islamist groups who saw a chance to succeed within the system – at least partially – but as moderationist movements. In these cases the Islamists split and radicals lost members to moderate fractions. In other cases – such as pre-1979 Iran or post-1991 Algeria, where no opportunities existed for moderates and Islamists faced undisguised repression, they typically radicalized. In such cases, where the state establishment alienated Islamists of any stripe, moderates either lost their significance or joined the radicals, destroying their chances of reconciling democratic ideas and Islamism. Where radicalism dominated among Islamic groups who were either in power or in opposition, the rights of certain groups – mainly non-Muslims and women – came under attack by the beleaguered Islamists. In places such as Iran and Saudi Arabia, where radical Islam controlled political power, stoning women who committed adultery, flogging people who consumed alcohol or drugs, and amputating the hands of the thieves, were all part of acceptable legal practices (Rohde 2005). Where radical Islam is in opposition - such as in Algeria - burning villages of civilians who do not cooperate with the radicals or harassing unveiled women were part of the radicals' resistance strategies (Hafez 2000).

The danger that radical Islam posed to the prospects of democracy and peace became more evident than ever, not only in Muslim countries but in the whole world, after 9/11. The terrorist attacks of a radical Islamic organization Al Qaeda, against the Pentagon and World Trade Center, the military and economic targets that the organization found responsible in the suffering of the Muslims in the Middle East, showed the potency that radical Islamic opposition movements had achieved. Under the circumstances, the emergence of a powerful moderationist movement among Turkish Islamists struck many political observers as a potential internal solution to Islamic radicalism.

What makes the Turkish example special is that it is simultaneously a country where religious extremists operate routinely and one which has witnessed the rise of the most influential moderate Islamist movement in the Muslim world. The Turkish lesson suggests that democratic attitudes can flourish even among previously undemocratic actors, Islamist or not, if surrounding conditions encourage such a change. Islamists are no different than other strategic actors on the political arena. They can be willing to give up or postpone some of their radical demands and agree on the rules of democracy, when they are given a chance to be equal partners in the framework of democracy. As Salame suggests, “democracy without democrats” is possible (1994:3). Actors behave democratically if they are given the chance and if they realize this is the most beneficial way for them to survive given the high costs associated with antisystemic methods. “Democrats may not exist at all...yet democracy can still be sought as an instrument of civil peace and hopefully, gradually, inadvertently, produce its own defenders (3).”

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ⁱⁱ The phrases found to incite religious hatred were: 'Minarets are our bayonets, domes are our helmets, mosques are our barracks, believers are our soldiers.'

ⁱⁱⁱ Turkish law requires obeying Ataturk's 1920 dress code, which bans the use of religious symbols, including women's headscarves, in all public officers and in all high schools and universities (except by clergy members or clergy members-in-training).

^{iv} The 2003 European Union reform package relaxed restrictions on Kurdish broadcasting, use of Kurdish names, and the establishment of Kurdish language schools.

^v Among these lobbying efforts was the petition drive by veiled students to enter universities banning veils. Ironically, when Abdullah Gul became prime minister in 2003, it was revealed that his wife had filed to the EU Human Rights Court, complaining about laws restricting the public use of the headscarf. While she retracted her complaint, it was demonstrative of the "boomerang" strategy. So far, the Islamists have not achieved the Kurds' success in lobbying international actors to ally with them against the Turkish state. International human rights organizations sympathetic to Kurdish autonomy and rights have not shown the same interest in the Islamists who complained that their religious rights were being restricted by the rigid secularist Turkish state.

^{vi} This is not a real person, but rather a "composite" character constructed to more thoroughly depict positions.

^{vii} While Sadik is a fictitious "composite" character (and the only one in this case study), sources have documented dialogues between soldiers and Erdogan on the idea of a moderate Islam. On June 26, 2001, *Aksam* Newspaper journalist Sakir Suter wrote that when the RP was banned, Erdogan considered not joining the new FP, but rather establishing a new party with more than 20 of his colleagues. A message was sent to a retired soldier, considered the "representative of the military in civil outfit." The general was excited by the idea and conveyed the message to the military hierarchy. A meeting was held, and the idea of dividing Islamists from within was welcomed. The strategy adopted was not to stop Erdogan, and to remain silent about the emergence of the movement. One general objected, saying this would mean "bargaining" with Islamists, which was unacceptable. The military's answer, then, to Erdogan's message was negative. On the other hand, as Cakir et.al.(2001) reports in February 28, 2001, *Zaman* Newspaper journalist Aydogan Vatandas wrote a news about a dinner Erdogan and a retired soldier Atilla Kayat had in Hidir, a public restaurant. In the meeting, Kiyat expressed concerns about secularism, EU membership, and internal security. Erdogan listened and pointed out that the fear of Islamic fundamentalism was sometimes exaggerated and manipulated by vested political interests. Contacts between the military and Erdogan were also alleged in a book written by Yilmaz (2001), which said that in April 2001, a soldier in civil outfit visited Erdogan and sought the imprisoned Islamist's counsel. Erdogan explained that he was committed to secularism; that he had changed and would avoid radicalism.

^{viii} According to Turkish law, parties' vote shares need to exceed a 10 percent threshold for the parties to be eligible for parliament seats. However, municipal governments are not only exempt from such barrier, but they are also more removed from other governmental interventions suffered by parliamentary actors. While institutions such as the National Security Council, the Constitutional Court and the presidency (as per the French model, Turkey has a president and prime minister, but the prime minister is more powerful) can restrain the parliamentary government; few such constraints exist on municipal governments.