Chapter 2

When Is Normalization Also Democratization? Islamist Political Parties, the Turkish Case, and the Future of Muslim Polities

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What does normalization mean in an electoral democracy with considerable majoritarian and authoritarian characteristics? This chapter examines what we learn from the Turkish case regarding how Islamist political parties behave and sometimes become normalized in response to electoral, competitive politics as well as secularist constraints. I also explore what kinds of changes their normalization might entail and how this might affect democracy. The relationship between democratization and the participation of religious actors in politics is multifaceted and contingent.[1] Thus, I will try to identify and conceptualize when and to what extent the normalization of religious politics might also contribute to democratization. I will do so through a cross-temporal examination of Turkish democracy and political Islam since the 1970s.

I contend that the transformation of Turkish Islamists since the 1990s illustrates how electoral incentives combined with nonelectoral, authoritarian interventions can bring about the normalization of Islamism. This normalization includes compromises with the country's mainstream politics, society, and international political and economic linkages. The Turkish case also shows the democratic implications of normalization if a country lacks the values, institutions, and relationships of a fully democratic "center" and Islamist and secularist actors fail to cooperate for democratic reforms.[2] Normalization has enabled Turkish Islamists to expand their constituency,

find liberal and secular domestic and international allies, and rule the country since 2002 by winning three consecutive national elections and a crucial constitutional referendum in 2010. But the implications for democratization indicate a double-edged relationship between normalization and democratization in the context of a flawed democracy. On one hand, Turkish Islamists used these benefits of normalization to make Turkey considerably more democratic in many respects. In particular, they raised the income level, curtailed militaristic and judicial tutelage, and allowed pious Turks, who previously felt disadvantaged, more access to mainstream social and political life. On the other hand, democratization suffered as Turkish Islamists instrumentalized their "normalcy" for their own material and ideological purposes. They began to exclude secular rivals, became increasingly intolerant of opposition and secular freedoms, and embarked on Islamic social engineering, especially after liberating themselves from non-electoral constraints.

In many ways, Islamists began to reproduce many authoritarian characteristics of mainstream Turkish politics and the state-society relationship in such a way that they now favor and serve Islamic-conservative elites, communities, and values at the expense of others. The inability of weak secular opposition to democratically check and balance the Islamists contributed to this outcome. Democratization is a multidimensional process and the normalization of Islamists generated progress in some dimensions while producing regression in others.

Islamism has been a dynamic and important social, political, and ideological current in Turkey since the nineteenth century.[3] Yet until recently secular republicanism primarily shaped what was considered "normal" or "mainstream" in Turkish politics and society. This is because secular nationalists oppressed and excluded the Islamist opposition when they unilaterally shaped the mainstream institutions and values of the republic during the 1920s and 1930s.[4]

Political Islam, which had previously found limited expression in center-right political parties, entered the political scene with the formation of the first explicitly Islamist parties during the 1970s. Since then, these parties have proved themselves to be shrewd political actors and modern electoral machines with a remarkable ability to embrace selective features of mainstream Turkish politics. At the same time, they gradually transformed mainstream politics by contesting elections, participating in governments, having their supporters enter the state bureaucracy, and politicizing new

issues, identities, and values, which mainstream parties felt compelled to address. Hence, they simultaneously played a participatory-electoral and a "regime delegitimation" game with respect to mainstream politics.[5] They also invented new political and discursive strategies and adapted to changing domestic and external circumstances.

Nevertheless, until the 1990s these parties were relatively small with an antisystemic orientation and came to power only as junior partners in coalition governments. Thus, they were not perceived as part of "normal" politics and catered to a narrow ideological constituency. In 1996, the Welfare Party (RP) became the first Islamist party to win a national election and came to power as the senior partner of a coalition government. The short-lived RP government fell as a result of a vicious, military-induced secularist campaign.[6] In 2002, however, a breakaway party rooted in the same tradition, the moderate-Islamist Justice and Development Party (AKP) came to power in a single-party government and has managed to govern the country since then. As we will see, in addition to fortuitous circumstances, the main factor that explained the AKP success was its pragmatism. This enabled the party to embrace—or compromise with—the discursive and behavioral attributes that were normal and acceptable in the eyes of the mainstream domestic and external (Western) power holders. The AKP also adjusted to changing global political and economic conditions more aggressively and extensively than any of its predecessors. Thus, the party was able to expand its voter base beyond religious conservatives to a broad spectrum of centrist voters. It also enlisted the crucial support of major segments of the liberal-secular intelligentsia, media, and economic bourgeoisie. These strategic moves helped the party to secure the initial, contingent tolerance of the pro-secular military and judiciary, and the acceptance of Turkey's Western allies, most importantly the EU and United States. Thus, the AKP's willingness and ability to "look and act normal" in the perception of a wide variety of domestic and external actors explains many of its accomplishments.

But this normalization did not always make the party adopt more democratic attitudes and policies because normal Turkish politics harbored a great deal of authoritarianism to begin with. The party adopted many of these authoritarian norms and attitudes, such as impatience with criticism, opposition, and consensus-building and only grudging respect for moral and ideological pluralism, and freedom of expression. At the same time, during its decade-long tenure in government, the party has gradually

remolded mainstream Turkish politics, sometimes in a more pluralist and other times in a more authoritarian direction, because its own ideological repertoire was a mixture of democratic and authoritarian values itself, especially but not exclusively in the social realm.[7] The methods that the party has employed to transform Turkish politics and society have included many practices that cannot be considered normal or legitimate in consolidated democracies. In the end, the AKP government has been very successful in advancing Turkish democracy in areas such as subduing military tutelage over civilian politics. But its impact in areas such as freedom of expression, government accountability, judicial neutrality and independence, and ethnic and religious pluralism has been disappointing, if not regressive.[8]

This Turkish experience helps envisage how Islamist political parties might behave after becoming dominant political actors and liberating themselves from secularist veto players. In recent legislative elections, Islamists gained about 70 percent and 41 percent of the seats in Egypt and Tunisia, respectively. Thus, Islamist political parties may become the predominant players in some of the emerging Muslim-majority polities following the Arab Spring. Many of them such as the Egyptian and Syrian Muslim Brothers and Tunisian Al-Nahda have declared the AKP as partial examples for themselves. Likewise, major portions of the public in Arab countries see Turkey "as a good model."[9]

In the case of the Turkish AKP, it is useful to conceptualize "normalization" as a process whereby the party selectively adapts to the mainstream social, political-economic, and international contexts in which it operates, which can be called a country's "center."[10] I discuss the evolution of Turkish Islamist parties' normalization process by examining consecutive chronological periods when these parties were faced with both opportunities and constraints in the Turkish political system. In doing so, I evaluate how the arguments presented in Chapter 1 of this volume play out in the Turkish case.

The Emergence of Turkish Political Islamism: 1971–1983

From 1946, when Turkey transitioned to multiparty politics, until the 1970s, religiously inspired ideas were represented within center-right parties. The first explicit and short-lived Islamist party was established in 1970

by a group of dissidents from the center-right Justice Party. These dissidents were led by a charismatic Ph.D. in engineering, Necmettin Erbakan (1926–2011), who founded the National Outlook (Milli Görüş) (MG) movement and ideology. From then on for three decades, the MG became the primary ideological and organizational basis of a series of political Islamist parties.

Turkish Islamists sought to establish an independent political party distinct from center-right parties mainly in reaction against mainstream Turkish politics and society. Thus, one would need to refer to the attributes of the Turkish social and political "center" in order to fully grasp its roots and nature.[11] The institutional and ideological features of the center were shaped by top-down secular-modernist reforms during the 1920s and 1930s. These radical reforms were anticlerical and secularizing but also continued the late-Ottoman tradition of employing and instrumentalizing Islam for modernization as well as the goals of the state.[12] The leading actor of this era was the Republican People's Party (CHP) founded by Kemal Atatürk (1881–1938), which established an authoritarian single-party regime.[13] After completing Turkey's secular-nationalist transformation, the CHP partially moderated its secularist policies and allowed the transition to multiparty politics in 1950. This reflected the intra-elite divisions within the CHP, a compromise with Muslim-conservative median voters, and a willingness to integrate with the Western world in the post–World War II international context.[14] But despite this transition to electoral democracy and the institution of a formally liberal-democratic constitution in 1961, authoritarian state policies and military praetorianism remained deeply ingrained attributes of the Turkish state-society relationship and normal politics.

The main features of the political center thus became Turkish nationalist; semidemocratic (an electoral democracy with an illiberal state and military tutelage); secular but with state control of religion and instrumentalization, even promotion of Sunni Islam (laiklik)[15]; a vision of modernization encouraging political-economic as well as social-cultural westernization; and, especially after the end of World War II, a foreign policy firmly based in Western alliances such as NATO membership. The mainstream socioeconomic context was a predominantly Muslim-conservative and secularizing society, with a state-dominant, urban-centric developing economy.

Against this background and compared with center-right parties, the establishment of Islamist parties represented a moment challenging political normalcy. This is because Islamist parties differed from the center-right

parties through their explicit and unwavering objection to some features of the political center such as Turkish state-controlled secularism, sociocultural Westernization, and pro-Western foreign policy. In the view of the MG, most of Turkey's socioeconomic ills and international weakness could be attributed to the country's pro-secular and pro-Western orientation.[16] The MG movement was founded in defense of "Islamic values," proposing an indigenous (milli) developmental path as an alternative to the extant parties "imitating the West." At the same time, the MG parties embraced electoral democracy and made efforts to run on a diversified political platform including religious as well as secular issues.

What led to the formation of the MG parties? Sufi brotherhoods, disenchanted with the performance of center-right parties, were instrumental. Therefore, the transformation of the Sufi orders into social and political-economic movements can be seen as a crucial causal process.[17] However, the MG parties remained sensitive to the support of but organically separated from Sufi movements. The same can be said for the relationship between the MG parties and other Islamist groups and the Islamic movement in general, which the former tried to mobilize as well as control.[18] In terms of grassroots organization and ideology, the MG parties drew their support from the MG movement.

Another important development was the shifting interests of the small and medium size businesses in central Anatolia, which were diverging from the interests of big business in large urban centers and coastal Turkey.[19] When center-right parties failed to reconcile these two groups' interests, the MG developed a program and discourse to represent the interests of small business in Anatolia.

All this should not lead us to underestimate the role of ideas and ideological trends. Social and economic developments only created political opportunities for the formation of Islamist parties. By themselves, they do not explain why and how some Islamists responded to these opportunities with a particular Islamist frame of reference. The MG movement was developed by Erbakan in a particular historical and intellectual milieu. This milieu reflected the thinking of Turkish Islamic intellectuals that had been changing through domestic experiences and debates as well as interactions with global ideas. The latter included third world developmentalism and revolutionary Islamism.

The first MG party was short-lived, shut down by the Constitutional Court soon after the 1971 military coup. It was soon replaced by the

National Salvation Party (MSP). During the 1970s, this party managed to become a junior partner in a series of coalition governments including one with the mainstream CHP, with an average voter support of 10.18 percent.

The Rise of Turkish Political Islam: 1984–1997

This period witnessed the weakening of pro-secular political parties and the ascendance of political Islam, especially during the 1990s. The average voter support of Islamist parties increased to 17.89 percent in the national elections during the 1990s. In local elections, they were even more successful. While Islamists thus increasingly became major players in electoral politics, this did not necessarily mean that they made less use of religious discourse and ideology. In fact, Table 1 shows that religion and the discourse of national-religious authenticity became more prominent in the program of the RP.

Normal politics in Turkey became more Islamic-conservative and nationalist during this period. Arguably, this reflected the intended and unintended consequences of authoritarian and ostensibly secularist state interventions in politics, the policies of Islamist and center-right political parties, and global developments. The military regime of 1980–1983 embraced the "Turkish-Islamic synthesis ideology" as an antidote against the "Marxist threat." This ideology was developed by some Islamic intellectuals and adopted by the military, echoing the Brzezinski doctrine of establishing a "green crescent" surrounding the Soviet Union's southern belly. The military regime promoted Islamic discourse and identity, introduced mandatory religion courses in primary and secondary schools and constitutionally tasked the colossal state agency regulating Islam, the Directorate of Religious Affairs (Diyanet), with promoting "national solidarity and unity." The self-identified preferences of median Turkish voters thus began to grow more nationalist and conservative.[20]

At the same time, even though the military targeted all movements it deemed subversive, including the Islamists, its crackdown was most effective against the leftists. Islamists took advantage of both the Turkish-Islamic synthesis ideology and the gap in Turkish politics vacated by the leftists after the 1980 military coup.

The AKP's main predecessor, the Welfare Party (RP), was founded in 1983 by the leadership of the MSP. After a less than impressive electoral

Table 1: Frequency of Discourse of Religion and Authenticity in Programs of Turkish Islamist parties (per 1,000 words)

	MNP-Program (1970–1971)	MSP-Program (1972–1980)	RP-Program (1983–1998)	FP-Program (1997–2001)	SP-Program (2001–)	AKP-Program (2001–)
Religion (din)	0.15	3.33	3.61	3.33	2.58	1.88
Spirituality (maneviyat)	2.75	2.78	3.89	0.66	1.92	0.27
National (milli)*	5.11	3.33	7.78	2.33	1.00	0.67

*In MG ideology, "national" (milli) has strong religious overtones as the MG believes Islam to form the main and crucial ingredient of Turkish national identity.

performance in 1987 (7.16 percent of the national vote), which fell short of the 10 percent threshold necessary to enter the parliament, the RP significantly increased its votes to 16.88 percent in the 1991 elections. A successful electoral coalition with two other far-right parties contributed to this increase. In 1994, the RP raised eyebrows in local elections by capturing 19.14 percent of the vote and winning the mayorships of major cities like Istanbul and Ankara. This foreshadowed the party's remarkable success in the national elections a year later. Following its emergence as the winner of the 1995 national election with 21.38 percent of the vote, the RP became Turkey's first Islamist party to rise to power as the dominant partner of a fragmented coalition government.

The RP embraced electoral, competitive politics and saw significant rewards for doing so. In the process, it developed a political platform and used frames of reference that extended far beyond the use of religion. It was able to effectively address nonreligious issues such as economic development and displayed considerable ideological and discursive innovativeness and flexibility. This contributed to the party's electoral successes. Compared to the MSP, the RP managed to mobilize a larger segment and broader cross-class coalition of voters. In addition to small town merchants and small businesses, it appealed to "recently migrant urban slum-dwellers, a growing group of Islamist professionals and intellectuals, and the rapidly rising Islamic bourgeoisie."[21] The RP was a modern party and built an efficient grassroots organization that synthesized traditional idioms and modern methods of mobilization. It promised rapid and equitable economic development and prosperity.

The RP also benefited from the weakening of the center-right and center-left parties. These parties were marred by internal struggles, endemic corruption, and failure to develop new electoral strategies beyond cliental-ism.[22] The festering Kurdish conflict and economic instability were also undermining their credibility and legitimacy. As a result, the RP was able to capture a significant segment of protest voters who felt alienated from the existing options on the center-right and center-left.

All this did not necessarily mean, however, that the RP was becoming a mainstream party. Tuğal argues that in some ways the RP radicalized (while the more radical Islamist fringe groups moderated) during the late 1980s and early 1990s.[23] Despite its discursive and political flexibility and dynamic efforts to attract a broader segment of voters, the RP remained a mainly antisystemic party,[24] highly critical of Turkey's Western political and cultural orientation. Its understanding of democracy was majoritarian rather than pluralist. It sought to revive an authentic Islam that the party's supporters believed to be central to Turkey's social and political identity.[25]

The RP respected the general principle of secularism but was highly critical of *laiklik* (Turkish secularism). It emphasized religious freedoms while disregarding the separation of state and religion.[26] While sympathetic to private business, it envisioned a state-led, fundamental transformation of the economic system. The party pronounced the idea of a new and just order (*adil düzen*), which would be accomplished through such practices as ending the charging of interest in economic transactions. It advocated ending Turkey's pursuit of EU membership, long-standing pro-Western foreign policy, and membership in international organizations such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Overall, Buğra argues, the RP sought "to establish religion as the cultural basis of a comprehensive reorganization of social, economic, and political life."[27]

Lacking sufficient power to reorient Turkey's economic and political system, the party focused on culture and foreign policy. These policies—such as a widely publicized first visit by Premier Erbakan to Libya, plans to build a mosque in Istanbul's central Taksim square—which symbolized secular culture and lifestyle—and efforts to allow public servants to wear head-scarves in government offices—proved deeply alienating to the pro-secular state elites and civil society. Consequently, a public campaign led by the military and backed by major pro-secular media, business and labor organizations rapidly eroded the party's ability to govern.

The final blow came on February 28, 1997, when the military-dominated National Security Council publicly criticized the government and effectively demanded that it implement a number of secularist reforms. The subsequent "February 28 process," which mainstream political parties openly or tacitly endorsed, turned into a "post-modern coup" and compelled the RP government to resign. A crackdown on actual and perceived Islamist political and economic actors followed, along with a series of reforms, particularly in the educational realm, ostensibly aimed at stemming Islamization. The Constitutional Court ultimately closed the RP in 1998.

The Moderation of Turkish Political Islam: 1998–2001

The authoritarian intervention of 1997 became the main trigger that led to the decisive normalization of Turkish political Islam.[28] After a brief period in which the Islamists competed under the banner of the Virtue Party (1999), the Islamist party split into two factions, with the reformist faction forming the Justice and Development Party (AKP). Thus, the AKP was the product of the reformers (*yenilikçiler*) within the MG, who decided to compromise with mainstream actors through significant discursive and organizational changes.

Early elections were called soon after the financial crises of 2000 and 2001, the worst in the country's history, and the AKP won the 2002 elections decisively. Turkish voters had decided to punish the mainstream parties, which they blamed for the crises, in favor of a new and "clean" party. Protest voters flocked to the AKP, lifting it to more success than it would have achieved through the normalization process alone. In a period of greater political stability, the reformist Islamists who formed the AKP would likely have been less successful.

But the party was able to use these circumstances because its founders had decided to normalize to avoid the RP's fate of closure by the Constitutional Court. In particular, the AKP's normalization entailed discursive and behavioral change in five areas: an organizational split from the MG tradition to highlight its distinctiveness from its predecessors; avoiding the discourse of religion and authenticity to minimize conflict with mainstream secularist actors and to appeal to a wider array of centrist voters; adopting the discourse of liberal as opposed to majoritarian democracy both to secure more protection from the authoritarian state and to reconcile with EU standards; embracing Turkey's Western alliances; and embracing economic globalism.

Table 2: Positive Evaluations of Electoral and Liberal Democracy in Pro-Islamic Press (%)

	1996–1999	2001–2004
Electoral democracy	65	71↑
Liberal democracy	69	76↑

The formation of a new party and organization signaled that the AKP would be more independent from the MG movement than the RP was. Table 1 illustrates that the AKP program deemphasized religion more than any of its predecessors had done. The AKP's strong discursive emphasis on liberal democracy was somewhat surprising for actors that had emerged from a tradition that had been suspicious of liberal values in politics. While embracing democracy in general and often embracing economic liberalism, many Islamists had traditionally viewed the extensive pluralistic and individual rights and freedoms that liberal democracy entails as a potentially divisive and corrupting influence.[29] However, the AKP's normalization in this realm was embedded in broader discussions among Islamic circles. Many Islamists had concluded that they needed liberal democratic rights and standards as an instrument to protect themselves from secularist interventions.[30]

One way of assessing Islamist opinions of liberal democracy, as well as how the AKP fits within the broader context of Turkish political opinion, is by examining the ideational patterns in the Turkish press. Turkish elites writing in the press comprise a wide spectrum, from activist journalists to academics and politicians, and are closely connected with the political field.[31] Based on a systematic content analysis of the pro-Islamic press, Table 2 compares the share of supportive views about liberal democracy in the four years from 1996, when the RP came to power, to 1999, with supportive views in the period from 2001, the year the AKP was founded, to 2004.[32] Pro-Islamic elites discussed both electoral and liberal democracy more positively in the second period, even though the overall findings (not shown here) indicate no change in the evaluation of democracy in the pro-secular press. As a result, the positive evaluation of democracy in the pro-Islamic press began to converge during this period with that in the pro-secular press. Arguably, this linkage to these broader discussions among the Muslim-conservative intelligentsia made the AKP's normalization more credible.[33] Similar figures summarized in Table 3 reveal that the pro-Islamic

Table 3: Changing Image of the West

		1996–1998	1999–2002	2003–2004
Pro-Islamic press	Positive	10% (42)	16% (69)	12% (45)
	Negative	72% (314)	55% (240)	60% (230)
	Neutral	19% (82)	29% (125)	28% (106)

Table 4: Image of EU

		1996–1998	2000–2002	2003–2004
Pro-Islamic press	positive	14% (24)	45% (274)	38% (235)
	negative	57% (98)	30% (180)	36% (225)
	neutral	29% (49)	25% (154)	25% (157)
Pro-secular press	positive	13% (30)	26% (170)	19% (77)
	negative	42% (99)	40% (260)	45% (186)
	neutral	45% (105)	34% (219)	36% (150)

elites' image of the West improved drastically. The numbers in parentheses indicate how many times a positive, negative, or neutral reference was made to the West. The years 2003–2004 are treated separately as the war in Iraq, which the Turkish public predominantly saw as an unjust occupation of a Muslim country, had a negative impact on coverage of the West. More striking findings summarized in Table 4 concern the image of the EU. In the second period in the religious press, the EU became a much more frequently discussed subject (receiving three times as many references), with a considerably more positive coverage. In fact, it became more positive than in the secular press. This is remarkable considering that pro-secular elites had previously been the frontrunners of Turkey's EU ambitions.

Secular Skepticism and Unsustainable Democratization: 2002–2007

The period 2002–2006 was a major democratic-reformist period for Turkish democracy, in addition to rapid economic recovery.[34] From the beginning, the AKP government gave its priority to the "twin objectives" of

democratization and Turkey's EU membership.[35] Major constitutional amendments expanded the formal freedoms of expression, association, press, and religion, while expanding minority rights and civilian authority over the military.[36]

Notably, this was a period of significant interparty cooperation. In general, the reforms were legislated with cooperation across Islamist-secularist ideological fault lines. EU conditionality for membership undoubtedly facilitated cooperation. At first, it is also tempting to interpret this as a welcome product of normalization. One might think that, as the AKP normalization narrowed the political distance between them and the secularists, the latter embraced cooperation with the Islamists This may indeed be part of the story for optimistic pro-secular actors. In fact, AKP's normalization divided pro-secular elites between skeptics and optimists. Major segments of the pro-secular military were particularly concerned; it became public later that some military commanders planned, or at least considered waging a coup against the government in its early years.

Nonelectoral constraints such as secularist veto players and the EU might have enabled skeptical pro-secular elites to cooperate with the AKP despite their misgivings about the latter's intentions regarding secularism. Skeptics' fears were curbed by the presence of a pro-secular president elected earlier, the EU anchor, and the ever watchful and still popular army. By using his powers to their utmost legal limits, president Ahmet Necdet Sezer—a staunchly secularist former judge—vetoed the government's appointments and laws. The military and the EU pronounced strong warnings whenever the government attempted to pursue a religious-conservative agenda such as a short-lived draft law criminalizing adultery in 2004.

But democratization was unsustainable with this role of nonelected veto players because their interference weakened democracy, kept religious-secular distrust intact, and undermined the incentives for pro-secular political parties and civil society organizations to reform themselves. The latter were in disarray because of internal fissures, corruption, discursive-ideological inertia, and AKP-skepticism.[37] The CHP reversed its earlier attempts to develop a more liberal secularist ideology such as the so-called "Anatolian left" project of the late 1990s, adopting instead a more radical-secularist orientation with a view to confronting the AKP.[38] Meanwhile, the AKP was gradually consolidating power through its economic performance and bureaucratic recruitments.

Things changed in 2007 when a showdown occurred between the AKP and the military and secular political and civil society over the AKP's election of Abdullah Gül to the presidency. As the military issued an ultimatum, pro-secular mass rallies protested against the government.[39] In the end, the AKP both elected Gül and won the parliamentary elections. This tipped the balance of informal power between the party and the secularists in favor of the former.[40]

Power Consolidation and the Question of Democracy: 2008–2011

In this period, the AKP consolidated its power and position in normal Turkish politics by winning a crucial referendum in 2010. In the 2011 national elections, it won almost half of the votes and became the first party in the country's history to win three consecutive national elections with increasing support each time. In addition, it wrested more autonomy from secularist nonelectoral constraints by effectively bringing the military under its control. In 2009, the Constitutional Court convicted the party of "being a focal point of anti-secular activities" but, in contrast to its decisions on earlier pro-Islamic parties, the court ruled not to ban the party, according to one author due to "the [overwhelming] economic, political and international costs of dissolving the popular governing party."[41] Meanwhile, a series of sensational trials convicted hundreds of civilians and military officers of plotting coups against the government. While these decisions were "milestones in civilian control over the military," a key disappointment was that they failed to "represent progress toward holding (state officials) accountable for their actions in a way that will resonate with the public across the political divide, and that (they) did not (necessarily) serve to promote a more democratic culture."[42]

Political stability and expanded autonomy for elected governments can be expected to advance democratization. But the actual impact on democratization was ambiguous because they made the AKP more complacent and less tolerant of opposition. The domineering reorientation of the AKP combined with the weak and distrustful opposition undermined interparty cooperation for the reforms that were necessary for further democratization.

Three more factors seem to have contributed to this outcome. The external support for Turkish democracy waned as Turkey's EU membership

prospects became increasingly moot for reasons on both sides. Electoral victories emboldened the government to express its conservative and authoritarian values in such areas as social pluralism and freedom of expression. And, even though the government made unprecedented attempts to resolve Turkey's festering democratic problems such as the Kurdish conflict, ideationally it was insufficiently prepared to generate specific policies and institutional solutions to address these problems.[43]

The pro–EU and pro–liberal democratic zeal of the AKP gave way to an increasingly majoritarian, religious, and social-conservative rhetoric and practice. Parliamentary attempts at writing a new constitution based on cross–party consensus were stalled at least in part because of the AKP's initiatives to replace the parliamentary system with a presidential or semi-presidential system that would give Prime Minister Erdoğan extensive powers. The AKP's earlier emphasis on developing civil society in general was transformed into the promotion of a religious-conservative civil society and the vilification of the rest, whether secularist, leftist, Kurdish, or Alevi.

Instead of working to construct a state apparatus more respectful of popular dissent and human life, the AKP began to reinforce the "normal" Turkish state orientation focused on controlling society and suppressing difference. The police forces grew in size by 72 percent in the period 2003–2012.[44] New laws and regulations gave the police, which lack transparency and accountability, extensive and often arbitrary powers to tap private communications, suppress protest, and monitor citizens' daily lives.[45]

In summer 2013, the government did not hesitate to fully and indiscriminately employ these powers against the anti-government "Gezi" protesters. According to available official reports, the Turkish police used more than 130,000 canisters of tear gas during the first twenty days of the protests; 8,000 people were injured and 5 people died during the clashes. Amnesty International maintained that at least three deaths occurred for reasons related to police brutality and the government's "attempt to smash the Gezi Park protest movement involved a string of human rights violations on a huge scale."[46]

Between 2007 and 2013, Turkey's score of press freedoms declined by about 49 percent. Between 2002 when the AKP came to power and 2007, Turkey's ranking was more or less stable (101 in 2007, 100 in 2002). By 2013, however, its ranking fell to 154 of 179 countries.[47]

A new educational bill overhauled the primary and secondary school system and allowed for more religious education. Use of religious discourse

became more frequent. Erdoğan declared abortion to be murder and new regulations made its practice very difficult. A 2013 law restricted sale and consumption of alcohol and transferred authority to issue licenses from elected mayors to government-appointment governors. Vice-prime minister Bülent Arınç opined that the new constitution should retain the unchangeable principle of republicanism but make the principles of democracy, secularism, and social state alterable by a supermajority.[48]

Rather than advocating for a fuller separation of religion and state, for example, by dismantling, downsizing, or decentralizing the state agency Diyanet, the AKP seemed to have embraced Turkey's state-controlled secularism for its own goals.[49] The Diyanet promotes an official version of Sunni Islam at the expense of other faiths and interpretations through such practices as employing imams (Muslim preachers)), subsidizing building Sunni mosques but not shrines of other sects, and publishing religious material. Diyanet personnel increased 33 percent between 2002 and 2013, from 74,374 in 2002 to 84,195 in 2007 and 98,555 in 2013. Its share in the total state budget rose more than twofold, from 0.54 percent in 2002 to 0.82 in 2006 and 1.2 percent in 2012.[50]

Conclusions

The Turkish case lends substantial but qualified support to the arguments articulated in this volume and invites us to further theorize the relationship between normalization and democratization. As they participated in electoral politics, Turkish Islamist political parties indeed became "normalized" in many ways. They increasingly accommodated themselves "to the rules of the political regime" in which they operated and became "less unique and more *normal* political actors, when compared with other parties in the competitive system," at least when compared to center-right parties. The Turkish case is consistent with the thesis that parties without strong ties to Islamic movements will be more likely to normalize. The AKP became more flexible by disassociating itself from the MG organically and ideologically, even though the MG was more a social-political movement than a religious movement. Second, the experience of the AKP lends support to the argument that Islamist parties are more likely to be successful when they can attract a significant segment of protest voters whose preferences are not religiously based.

However, the rest of the story draws a more complicated picture inviting further theorization about the relationship between electoral participation and religious politics, as well as about the process of normalization and democracy. First, while participation in electoral politics made Turkish Islamist parties prioritize and develop policies on nonreligious issues such as economic development, this did not necessarily translate into less emphasis on religious content. During the 1990s, religious and moral issues found more expression in the RP's program when compared to its predecessors of the 1970s, even though the RP enjoyed more electoral support. This apparent reversal of normalization cannot be explained without analyzing the changing profile of Turkish voters, who had simultaneously become more religious-conservative in their orientation, the altered international environment in which Islamism was a rising political-ideological trend, and Islamist parties' continuous efforts to rearticulate non-religious issues within an Islamic discursive framework, and vice versa.

Furthermore, the AKP, which had sharply deemphasized religious issues at the time of its election in 2002, began to reemphasize them after 2008 when it felt more secure and shielded from nonelectoral constraints in mainstream Turkish politics. This also happened in a period when the AKP was not facing serious competition from another Islamist party. Thus, one should not underestimate how deeply Islamist political actors desire to transform what is normal in society, while they also face strong incentives to gain acceptance as normal actors in the political process. Even when pro-Islamic parties are in opposition, Islamist actors who cooperate with pro-secular opposition do not always make concessions from their religious goals. Instead, they tend to focus on other, more practical goals by keeping religiously sensitive questions shielded from criticism and reconsideration.[51] Islamist political parties may strategically reprioritize Islamic issues depending on their electoral and political strength. This also means that the strength of rival pro-secular political parties, as well as the ability of pro-Islamic and pro-secular actors to challenge and cooperate with each other, are crucial factors in predicting to what extent and when an Islamist political party will deemphasize religious content.

Second, normalization in the Turkish case was far from a linear, continuous, inexorable process resulting from political participation. Rather, it occurred discontinuously, entailed reversals, and resulted from nonelectoral constraints and interventions as well as from competition with prosecular political parties.[52] The most decisive leap of normalization with the

emergence of the AKP resulted from a major clash with the secularist political center.

Third, it would be incomplete to analyze what normalization entails with reference to domestic politics alone. Normalizing Islamist political parties need to consider how external allies perceive and react to their politics. A major dimension of the AKP's normalization comprised its successful efforts to convince Western governments and business communities that it embraced Turkey's Western alliances, favored integration with the global economy, and would present a valuable example of "Muslim democracy" in the post-911 world.[53]

Fourth, Turkish Islamist parties have had a dual constituency, and many supporters vote for them not for religious reasons but out of a "deep dissatisfaction with other political alternatives or as protest against the political system." But relative credibility and performance of Islamist parties are crucial factors that determine to what extent nonreligious voters will support them. Most recently, the AKP increased its votes in the 2007 elections partly because many voters were protesting the military-induced secularist campaign against the party prior to the elections, and because the party had proved itself since 2002 by securing impressive economic growth and the start of EU accession talks. However, voters did not necessarily lend more support to the Islamists after a more vicious campaign against them in 1997, when the Islamists in government had much less to show in terms of successful governance.

Finally, all these observations mean that the impact of normalization on democratization depends on what is normal in a country, that is, the normative, behavioral and institutional qualities of that country's "center." Normalization can be a double-edged sword for democracy because it may lead an Islamist party to embrace democratic as well as authoritarian qualities of the mainstream politics in a country. In authoritarian or semidemocratic contexts, democratization requires pro-Islamic and pro-secular political actors to transform what is considered normal in their country by building the institutions, norms, and relationships of a more democratic center either together or unilaterally.[54]

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AND

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Contents