

Beyond a Political Party:  
The *AKP Machine* and Its Organizational Capacity

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## Declaration of Originality

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## Abstract

Beyond a Political Party: The AKP Machine and Its Organizational Capacity

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Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (AKP) has been in power in Turkey since 2002. Since the beginning, the party successfully managed to increase its effect on the politics. The AKP also has not lost its popular vote base despite the fact that the party adopted different policies and discourses. Studies mostly focused on the AKP's ideology, economic policies and foreign policy agenda. Especially the party's economic policies are taken into consideration to explain its effect on its constituents. However, from its foundation to today, AKP has chosen to appeal to the people when it has faced a threat against its legitimacy and existence. The party has a confidence to organize voters/citizens during moments of crisis. This thesis argues that AKP's one of the most important aspects is its ability to organize different segments of the society. From this point this thesis delves into the characteristics of the AKP's grassroots organization which is one of the missed angles by the researchers conducted about the AKP.

Theories about political parties have explained the role of political parties as organizing popular vote base for either representing a certain ideology on the state level or satisfying personal ambitions of politicians. However, in this thesis I argue that the AKP moved beyond a political party on the account of its disciplined and ceaselessly working grassroots organization. Considering the history of political Islam in Turkey, this thesis further asserts that the AKP professionalized a certain organizational model which it inherited from Milli Görüş Movement.

32,000 words

## Özet

Bir Siyasal Partinin Ötesinde: AKP Makinesi ve Örgütsel Kapasitesi

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Doçent Z. Umut Türem, Tez Danışmanı

Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (AKP) 2002 yılından bu yana Türkiye siyasetinin merkezinde yer alıyor. Kuruluşundan bu yana parti siyaset üzerindeki etkisini artırarak devam ettirdi. Zaman içerisinde farklı söylem ve politikalar belirlemesine rağmen AKP'nin seçmen desteğinde de azalma meydana gelmedi. Yapılan araştırmalar genellikle partinin ideolojisine, ekonomi politikalarına ve dış politika ajandasına odaklandı. Özellikle ekonomi politikaları partinin seçmenler üzerindeki etkisini açıklamak için en önemli araç olarak kullanıldı. Ancak kuruluşundan bu yana parti özellikle meşruiyetine ve varoluşuna karşı tehlikelerle karşılaştığında halka gitme yolunu tercih etti. Hatta partinin oy verenleri/vatandaşları organize etme konusunda bir güveni olduğu söylenebilir. Bu tez partinin en önemli özelliklerinden birisinin toplumun farklı gruplarını organize etme becerisi olduğunu ileri sürüyor. Bu noktadan hareketle bu tez AKP'nin çoğunlukla incelenmemiş taban örgütlenmesinin temel özelliklerini araştırıyor.

Siyasal partiler teorileri partilerin varoluşlarını oy verenleri organize ederek belirli bir ideolojiyi devlet katında temsil etmek ya da siyasetçilerin hırslarını tatmin etmek olarak açıklar. Bu tez AKP'nin disiplinli ve sürekli çalışan taban hareketi sayesinde klasik bir siyasal partiden farklı hareket ettiğini iddia ediyor. Siyasal İslam'ın Türkiye'deki tarihini de göz önünde bulundurarak tezin iddialarından birisi de AKP'nin Milli Görüş Hareketinden miras aldığı taban örgütlenmesi modelini profesyonelleştirdiğidir.

32.000 kelime



Ezgi'ye

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## Abbreviations and Acronyms

AKP	Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi / Justice and Development Party
CHP	Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi / Republican People's Party
MHP	Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi / Nationalist Action Party
RP	Refah Partisi / Welfare Party
FP	Fazilet Partisi / Virtue Party
SP	Saadet Partisi / Felicity Party
ANAP	Anavatan Partisi / Motherland Party
DP	Demokrat Parti/ Democratic Party
DYP	Doğru Yol Partisi / True Path Party
DSP	Demokratik Sol Parti / Democratic Left Party
AP	Adalet Partisi / Justice Party



## Introduction

**W**hat is the real source of power behind the Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi's (AKP, or Justice and Development Party) - sixteen-year tenure in Turkish politics? As of July 2019, the party still remains strong in many ways, even though it shows signs of losing power, particularly as seen in the local elections of 2019. The party's loss of major metropolitan mayorships is an important sign, pointing, perhaps, to a decline in the power of the party. Nevertheless, the AKP has enjoyed an unprecedented success in Turkish politics – ruling the country with single party governments for over 17 years!

So, what may be the reasons behind this party's success? Many studies have attempted to find answers for the party's emergence, its policies, discourse and electoral success. The AKP's economic policies, its pro-EU and pro-American foreign policy agenda, its charismatic leader and its capability to appeal to different segments of society help explain the party's initial success. Many scholars point to these attributes when analyzing the first years of AKP governments. In the party's beginning, studies tend to emphasize the AKP's economic policy agenda and its foreign policy priorities. However, the party and AKP governments managed to adopt opposing policies in different times, while holding onto power. In terms of economic policies, the 2000s brought prosperity to many individuals, but since the 2010s there has been a visible decline. In terms of foreign policy, the AKP adopted a pro-EU stance when the party was established, but after 2010, the party's policies shifted. The

AKP employed a discourse on defending democratization in line with the party's EU accession policy, but after the constitutional referendum in 2017, Turkey turned into an authoritarian presidential system. Still, the AKP has maintained its power, and its leader, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, has not changed. His charisma with his constituents cannot be dismissed, but the question remains: How can a leader maintain his effect despite the fact that he and his party have shifted between completely different policies and discourses? The aim of this thesis is to find an answer this question.

The history of the AKP shows that the party has the confidence to appeal to the public vote and win its support. During major threats to its existence, the AKP went to the public to consolidate its legitimacy and confidence. Based upon this pattern, this thesis argues that in addition to its ideology, economic policies, and foreign policies, one of the main sources of AKP's power comes from its ability to organize voters, constituencies and people. From this hypothesis, this thesis will explain the AKP's organizational structure and its operations within society. Furthermore, I argue that the AKP is the most institutionalized party of political Islam in Turkey, having inherited certain aspects of party organization from its predecessors. This thesis asserts that through its unique and compact structure, the AKP maintained its power by organizing, creating and gathering different segments of society based on the organization's professional work.

In this chapter, I will first look at the political conditions when the AKP was established. Then, I will look at the history of the AKP. I will also explain the methodology of the thesis and its limitations. Finally, I will explain the structure of this thesis.

When the AKP was established, it was applauded by many as a model for majority Muslim countries. Despite its Islamist background, the AKP could show the world that their agenda focused on the country's democratization. The party's aggressive reformist agenda based on the Copenhagen Criteria and commitments to human rights, as well as free market economics, attempted to show that a Muslim majority country run by ex-Islamists could be democratic after all. Tuğal in his book (2016) references the attitudes of two

US presidents; both liberals and conservatives applauded the ‘Turkish Model’<sup>1</sup>. George Bush and Barack Obama considered Turkey a democratic example for the Middle East. Obama even made one of his first presidential visit to Turkey in April 2009<sup>2</sup>. In his speech to the Turkish Parliament he stressed the importance of Turkey’s path, its EU agenda and gave support to the existing government<sup>3</sup>. At that time, Turkey was able to manage peace talks between Israel and Palestine. So much had changed during Obama’s presidency that he warned the world about the ebb in democracy across in the world on his last presidential visit to Greece<sup>4</sup>. Despite expectations of democracy in the region, Turkey itself turned into an authoritarian system. Interestingly, the leaders of the Middle East were toppled one by one after the Arab Spring in 2013. Some countries faced bursts of democracy like in Egypt. In the last seventeen years, Erdoğan and his party have remained in power unlike the rest of the Middle East. In order to understand how the AKP maintains its hegemony while increasing its voter base, I will first look at the party’s history. I find that during sensitive times, the AKP tries to appeal to the public.

## § 1.1 Critical Points in AKP’s History: Appealing to the People

The AKP was established in August 2001. The founders committee elected Recep Tayyip Erdoğan as their chairman. Abdullah Gül, Bülent Arınç, Mehmet Ali Şahin and Abdullatif Şener were other prominent leaders of the party. The small cadre that pioneered the party’s establishment belonged to the Millî Görüş Movement, a prominent political Islamist movement in Turkey. Estab-

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- 1 Cihan Tuğal, *The Fall of the Turkish Model: How the Arab Uprisings Brought down Islamic Liberalism* (Verso Books, 2016), 1.
  - 2 A.A, “Obama Türkiye’de,” accessed May 18, 2019, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/obama-turkiyede-11370337>.
  - 3 “Obama’dan tarihi konuşma,” accessed May 18, 2019, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/obamadan-tarihi-konusma-11376525>.
  - 4 The Obama White House, “Remarks by President Obama at Stavros Niarchos Foundation Cultural Center in Athens, Greece,” *Medium* (blog), November 17, 2016, <https://medium.com/@ObamaWhiteHouse/remarks-by-president-obama-at-stavros-niarchos-foundation-cultural-center-in-athens-greece-b72a8aa5099d>.

lished by Necmettin Erbakan in the late 60s, the Millî Görüş movement represented several parties in the political arena. The Refah Partisi (RP, or Welfare Party) managed to form a coalition government in 1996, however, the secular Turkish state would never allow Islamists to enter politics legally, so RP was closed down by the Constitutional Court in 1997. The other Millî Görüş' parties were also closed down by the Constitutional Court based on the state's secular principles. After RP, Millî Görüş opened Fazilet Partisi (FP, or Virtue Party), which was also closed down by the Constitutional Court in 2001. The AKP's founders were members of a faction within Millî Görüş, and they increased their criticisms after the closure of RP, and after the end of FP, they established the AKP.

The first real battle for the AKP was the 2002 general elections. The AKP won the majority of seats in the parliament with a landslide election victory in November 2002 and formed a single party government<sup>5</sup>. The 1982 Constitution includes a 10 percent threshold for parties, which means that if a party could not get more than 10 percent of the general votes, it could not have any seats in the parliament. With the help of this rule, put in place by the generals who instigated the 1980 military coup, the AKP was the most powerful party in parliament and in formed single-party government. Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi (CHP) was the second party in the parliament.

After two years in government, the AKP won local elections with 43.16 percent of the vote compared to 34.42% percent, which shows that the party increased its vote share.

The real challenge for the AKP started in 2007. Back then, the president of the country was elected by the parliament, and president Ahmet Necdet Sezer's term of office lasted until 2007. This meant that the AKP majority parliament had to choose a new president. The problem was that the AKP's candidate Abdullah Gül was one of the party's politicians with an Islamist background. His wife wore a headscarf, and this was a major issue for the secularists. He served as an MP and minister during RP governments. The secular

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5 2002 general election results: AKP: 34.42% (365 seats), CHP: 19.42% (177 seats), DYP 9.52% (0 seats), MHP 8.35% (0 seats), GENÇ Party 7.24% (0 seats), DEHAP 6.13% (0 seats), ANAP 5.12% (0 seats), Independent: 0.96% (8 seats), others: 8.84% (0 seats)

Turkish state with the help of the Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi (CHP, or Republican People's Party) tried to keep the presidency from the Islamists. The military also interfered with the election by issuing a memorandum that recommended MPs elect a secular minded person for the presidency<sup>6</sup>. The AKP did not retreat and put forth Abdullah Gül as their candidate. The Constitutional Court revoked the election based on the claim that a procedural mistake was made by parliament<sup>7</sup>. It was a very tense situation: On one side, the secular state gathered together to ensure that an Islamist did not become president, while on the other side, the AKP faced a major challenge to its power. In remembering the long history of Islamists, the secular state never allowed them to become institutionalized. At that moment, the AKP could have chosen another candidate for the presidency who did not have an Islamist background. However, the AKP saw the secular state's attempt as a legitimacy problem. Early elections were called by the government<sup>8</sup>. The number one issue was the presidency. This marked the first time that the AKP chose to appeal to the public to solve a major problem.

In the 2007 elections, the AKP increased its vote share to 46.58 percent of the electorate. Again, it was a landslide victory for the party. The most important issue was to show that the AKP's legitimacy was based on the support of the people. Besides, the government passed legislation, suggesting a public vote to change the method of selecting the president through elections. After the referendum held in October 2007, the electoral system changed, and the public vote became necessary for the presidency for the first time in Turkish history<sup>9</sup>.

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6 "Genelkurmay'dan Çok Sert Açıklama," accessed May 19, 2019, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/genelkurmaydan-cok-sert-aciklama-6420961>.

7 "Anayasa Mahkemesi 367 Şart Dedi," accessed May 19, 2019, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/anayasa-mahkemesi-367-sart-dedi-6436574>.

8 A.A, "Erdoğan'ın Konuşmasının Tam Metni," accessed May 19, 2019, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/Erdoğanin-konusmasinin-tam-metni-6445382>.

9 "En Düşük Katılımlı Referandum," accessed May 19, 2019, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/en-dusuk-katilimli-referandum-7532868>.

One year later, the Chief Public Prosecutor's Office opened a case against the AKP to close the party and ban its leaders from politics<sup>10</sup>. The prosecutor claimed that the AKP was acting against the secular foundations of the Turkish state. This was another legitimacy crisis for the AKP. After this case, the battle between the government and the secular cadres in the judiciary became more obvious. The AKP held onto the government, the presidency and the parliament. Yet, the old cadres in the judiciary who were defending the secular state created problems for the AKP. There is a unique case that shows the war between the AKP and the judiciary in clear terms. Fevzi Budak was the Provincial Director of National Education in Erzurum. After the AKP formed the government, Budak was dismissed from his duty. However, he opened cases against the government twelve times and he eventually went back to his duty<sup>11</sup>. The AKP tried to manage the state bureaucracy, but the judiciary mostly ruled against the government's will. The same situation held for the Constitutional Court.

On the one hand, the AKP criticized and found support against the judiciary, but on the other hand, the party had to solve this problem, which indicated that the party had a legitimacy problem. In 2010, the AKP held a public referendum to reform the judiciary. After the 2010 referendum, the parliament, government and the presidency (all three held by the AKP) became more powerful than the judiciary<sup>12</sup>.

In June 2013, Turkey faced one of the largest street protests in its history. Protesters captured Taksim Square for almost a month against the govern-

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- 10 "İşte AKP İddianamesi Tam Metin," accessed May 19, 2019, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/iste-akp-iddianamesi-tam-metin-8467042>.
- 11 Nuran ÇAKMAKÇI, "70 Müfettiş Yolladılar, 12 Kere Görevden Aldılar Bakana Mobbing Davası Açtı, 16 Bin Lira Kazandı," accessed May 19, 2019, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/70-mufettis-yolladilar-12-kere-gorevden-aldilar-bakana-mobbing-davasi-acti-16-bin-lira-kazandi-11666547>.
- 12 "Referandum Erdoğan'ın İktidarını Pekiştirdi - Son Dakika Haberler," accessed May 19, 2019, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/referandum-erdoganin-iktidarini-pekistirdi-15766996>.

ment's urban development plan to get rid of a public park to restore a historical building<sup>13</sup>. At the end, the government took control, but it was the first time that the party faced a public outcry, which could also be interpreted as a legitimacy problem for the party. Later in that year, there were corruption cases against ministers, which aimed to topple then Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan<sup>14</sup>. The government insisted that the cases were held by a secret organization within the state, which they referred to as the Gulenist Network, a longtime ally for the AKP. The party denounced the corruption cases and a fight between Gulenists and the AKP started. For the first time in history, two different blocks of the Islamist tradition started a battle, and again, the party accepted this challenge as a threat to its existence, which turned the March 2014 local elections into a confidence vote for the party. In order to denounce the public protests and the corruption cases, the AKP used elections and consolidated its legitimacy with a landslide victory<sup>15</sup>. One could argue that winning an election does not mean that a major problem has been solved. However, the party's perception of the election results was that the 'public discarded the threat against AKP's existence'<sup>16</sup>.

The last issue to appeal to the public was the July 15, 2016 coup attempt. After the battle started between the AKP and the Gulenist Organization, the government tightened the operations of the Gulenists. They were defined as a terrorist organization and declared the number one threat against the state<sup>17</sup>.

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- 13 "Police Attack Protesters in Istanbul's Taksim Square," *The New York Times*, sec. World, accessed May 19, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2013/06/01/world/europe/police-attack-protesters-in-istanbuls-taksim-square.html>.
- 14 Mahmut Hamsici BBC Türkçe, "10 Soruda: 17-25 Aralık Operasyonları," BBC News Türkçe, accessed May 19, 2019, [https://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler/2014/12/141212\\_17\\_25\\_aralik\\_operasyonu\\_neler\\_oldu\\_10\\_soruda](https://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler/2014/12/141212_17_25_aralik_operasyonu_neler_oldu_10_soruda).
- 15 "Seçim 2014 Yerel Seçim Sonuçları Partiler," accessed May 19, 2019, <https://www.haber-turk.com/secim/secim2014/yerel-secim/partiler>.
- 16 "30 Mart Balkon Konuşması - Son Dakika Haberler," accessed May 19, 2019, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/30-mart-balkon-konusmasi-26119975>.
- 17 "T.C.CUMHURBAŞKANLIĞI: 2014 Yılıın Son MGK'sı Cumhurbaşkanlığı Sarayı'nda Gerçekleştirildi," accessed May 19, 2019, <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/haberler/410/1587/2014-yilinin-son-mgksi-cumhurbaskanligi-sarayinda-gerceklestirildi>.

Members were arrested, corporations with ties to the Gulenists were closed and the organization's newspapers and TVs were shuttered by the government. At the peak of the battle, a faction within the military started a coup. It was a prime-time event that the world would watch. Plotters targeted President Erdoğan and other leaders of the government including the parliament, airports, public squares and strategic locations. The breaking point of that night was when Erdoğan connected to a TV program through his iPhone and asked citizens to revolt against the plotters<sup>18</sup>. People followed the president's call and Erdoğan managed to defeat the military coup by appealing to the public. This was not an election victory, but it had more effect in claiming the leader's legitimacy.

After the military coup attempt, supporters of the AKP stayed in the streets for almost a month and the party named this 'Democracy Watch<sup>19</sup>'. In June 2017, with the support of the Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi (MHP, or Nationalist Movement Party), the AKP held another referendum to shift Turkey from a parliamentary democracy to a presidential system. With 51.41 percent of the votes, the AKP under Erdoğan consolidated its power.

This thesis focuses on the time period between 2001 and 2017. However, there are some major issues to mention in here which happened since 2017. After the failed coup attempt, AKP wanted to get support of other political blocs. Only Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi (MHP) answered this call and in 2017's Referendum, in 2018's Presidential Election and in 2019's Local Elections AKP and MHP formed an alliance. They named this alliance "Cumhur İttifakı"<sup>20</sup>.

Even though the Cumhur İttifakı won the referendum and the Presidential election, in the last local election they lost in big cities. AKP lost Istanbul and Ankara which are ruled by Political Islamist parties since 1994. For Istanbul

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18 "Erdoğan: Milletimizi Meydanlara Davet Ediyorum - Son Dakika Flaş Haberler," accessed May 19, 2019, <https://www.cnnturk.com/turkiye/Erdoğan-milletimizi-meydanlara-davet-ediyorum>.

19 "Meydanlarda 'Demokrasi Nöbeti' Sürüyor," accessed May 19, 2019, <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/15-temmuz-darbe-girisimi/meydanlarda-demokrasi-nobeti-suruyor/620465>.

20 Gizem Karakış / Ankara, "Cumhur İttifakı'nın protokolü belli oldu," accessed May 28, 2019, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/cumhur-ittifakinin-protokolu-belli-oldu-40825667>.

there is going to be reelection on 23rd of June 2019. The focus in here is the party's organization. It is argued that party's Istanbul organization did not work sufficiently before elections. The organization's efficiency is under question necessarily after these election results. Is the machine going to stop at some point? Even if this thesis focuses between 2001 and 2017, it should be noted that AKP's organization might be having difficulties which have not seen before. For the future there is one more important point to note: The party has not seen a leader change. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has been its only leader since its foundation. Together with the issues today about the organization, will the AKP be strong enough when its leader changed in the future?

The effect of the AKP on Turkish politics should be analyzed based on these questions. In the future research, when the AKP's leader is changed the status of the organizations is seen, we will understand the effect of the organization in depth. This thesis tries to raise more questions on the issue. On the other hand, since AKP had a major loss in the last local elections<sup>21</sup> and if this loss will continue than social scientists will have a chance to look at both the rise and fall of the party. This comparison will reveal much data on the issue.

## § 1.2 Conceptualization and Research Design

Many studies analyze the rise and tenure of the AKP in over 15 years of government. The establishment and growth of the AKP is linked to the collapse of centrist politics in Turkey. This was also observed in the 2002 election results when several parties failed to garner a seat in parliament because of the 10 percent threshold. This enabled the AKP to win a majority in parliament with 33 percent of the vote<sup>22</sup>. Researchers are also interested in the AKP's ability to garner more votes and as a result, more power throughout the years.

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21 Especially the Istanbul mayoral elections were a major defeat for the AKP. The opposition candidate won the election in 31 March more than 10000 votes. However, the AKP managed to renew the elections. In the second one opposition candidate won the election more than 800000 votes.

22 "Seçim 2002 - Genel Seçim Sonuçları," accessed May 16, 2019, <https://www.haber-turk.com/secim2002>.

Some say that the AKP's economic policies and social welfare spending allowed it hold power. Onis, for example, says AKP's 'regulatory neoliberal economic policies' together with its controlled populism' are behind its years of electoral success<sup>23</sup> Some researchers conclude that Recep Tayyip Erdogan's charismatic leadership<sup>24</sup> along with the party's pro EU and democracy discourse led to the AKP's success. Almost every study I surveyed clearly stressed the importance of the AKP's robust organization, yet it was nearly impossible to find books or articles about the party's local structure. For the last couple of years, however, the AKP's organization began to attract attention and studies have been published<sup>25</sup>. I will discuss these studies in the following pages.

This study focuses on the organizational features of the AKP. In addition to the party's ideology, discourse and policy orientations, I claim that the AKP is a stable and successful organization starting from its establishment, which allowed it to hold power even as the party shifted between different economic policies and discourses from 2001 to 2017. My study suggests that the success of the AKP is linked to its political Islamist background. In terms of an institutionalist approach, there is continuity between the AKP and the organizational structure of Turkish Islamists.

The focus of this thesis is the AKP's local organization. Yet AKP is not the only party that has a strong and efficient local organization. For example, political parties of Kurdish movement, BDP (Barış ve Demokrasi Partisi) and HDP (Halkların Demokrasi Partisi) also have strong organization and it gives them a an effect in the developments within the politics for years. In here the AKP's organization is studied to show its effect on the AKP long tenure in the Turkish politics. Yet it is certainly not the only reason of the party's years of domination. It is one of the reasons behind AKP's long term success in the politics. Otherwise, all the parties that have strong local organization should have the same success.

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23 Z. Onis, "The Triumph of Conservative Globalism: The Political Economy of the AKP Era," *TURKISH STUDIES* 13, no. 2 (2012): 135, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14683849.2012.685252>.

24 Pelin Musil, *Authoritarian Party Structures and Democratic Political Setting in Turkey* (Springer, 2011), 48.

25 Sevinç Dogan's book, *Mahalledeki AKP*, and Toygar Sinan Baykar's *The Justice and Development Party in Turkey* are recent examples of increasing interest in AKP's organization.

### 1.2.1 *Methodology*

I used a mixed methodology approach: Semi-structured interviews were the main method, in addition to participant observation, and the analysis of primary sources such as parliamentary minutes, election materials, party documents, and newspapers.

Before starting my in-depth interviews, I conducted an extensive literature review. Political Islam in Turkey is a hot topic for researchers since the early 1990s. There are many works I needed to analyze in order to understand my subject matter. During my interviews, I was able to use the material I gathered from my literature review. Often, my knowledge about certain topics and my interviewees' perception did not align.

In addition to the literature review, I also did a pre-interview with one of my interviewees. Since I was trying to understand the organizational structure of Islamist parties and their operations in society, in-depth interviews are the most suitable method for my research.

First, I asked participants to explain their story about how they engaged in politics. In this way, I can understand the motivation behind their political work. Secondly, I was able to directly ask about the work done by different levels within the organizational structure. However, since politicians always consider their work as sacred or top secret, it was difficult for me to get them to open up and explain their work. To overcome this obstacle, I used my personal contacts to reach out to politicians. Besides, every interviewee referred me to another potential interview. This way, I was able to overcome the problem of trust, as well as the problem of finding someone to interview.

One of my interviewees did not want me to record the interview; I could only take notes. One of them wanted me to stop the recording a couple of times. I used the material from the former one, but I did not use my notes from the latter one. Another interesting issue was that some of the contacts provided by the interviewees did not agree to interview. I also wanted to hear the story of the AKP from opposition parties, but my contacts declined. I also used my personal contacts for interviews, yet it was not possible. Their refusal was sensible given the tense political situation. Even if I did not ask them about their top secret works, it was not easy for them to be open with me. Because of this, most of the interviews took an average of two hours.

Besides in-depth interviews, I also used participant observation for my research, which was useful, because there have been three elections since I started to work on this project. I attended the AKP's rallies and street meetings and met party volunteers. I also went to their headquarters and my observations from these visits shaped my research.

### 1.2.2 *In-depth Interviews*

For interviews, I prepared focus areas rather than defined questions, most of which were open ended. In order to explain the continuity and changes of organizational structure from the Milli Gorus (previous Islamist) parties to the AKP, I had to find people who worked: A) solely for the Milli Gorus parties, b) both the Milli Gorus parties and the AKP, and c) just for the AKP. Rather than conducting many short interviews, I focused on detailed conversations with my sample. I renamed my interviewees so as not to disclose their identities.

Hasan was one of the founding members of the AKP and he was one of the organizational leaders of the RP. Mustafa is now working for Saadet Partisi (SP), and he has been in Milli Gorus Parties since he was young. Ismail worked for AKP's youth organization. He left the party after 2 years. Leyla was a candidate for the AKP in 2011, and after her failed candidacy, she was asked to work for the organization; she spent six months in the party. Ayşe is working for an AKP organization. Ramazan worked for the MHP and then attended RP. He was one of the organizational leaders of the party's local branches. Mehmet is currently working for the SP. He has been in Milli Gorus parties since childhood. Levent was very close to several AKP members during the AKP's initial stages.

For me, in-depth interviews are enough to understand the organizational structure and operations of the AKP within society, yet I was unable to interview members of the women's organization. Although Leyla and Ayşe gave me insights about their works it would be beneficial to speak with one the members of women organization.

### 1.2.3 *Limitations*

Political Islam in Turkey has been an issue since the early 20th century. It was not easy to grasp all aspects of this subject in one study. The political organization of political Islam also dates back to the late 1960s. In addition, Turkey has a long democratic history; political parties have been operating since the last years of the Ottoman Empire. This kind of research needs a time limitation. For this thesis, I settled on the time period between 2001 and 2017, starting with the AKP's establishment and ending with the constitutional referendum that changed Turkey's political structure from a parliamentary democracy to a semi-presidential authoritarian regime. This study also gains insight from Islamist organizations established in the pre-AKP era, which can shed light on the future direction of the party.

Another caution of this study is that the women's organizations of AKP or Milli Gorus parties were not the focus of my research. I tried to make interviews with members of the women's organizations, but I could not get positive answers. Even if I get insights from these women, it should be noted that an exclusive study of women's organizations is necessary in order to fully understand the party's operations within society.

In addition, the political economic power of the party was not the focus of this study. Financial resources are crucial for political parties to operate, especially for parties like AKP which has been in power for over 16 years, but I chose not to focus on this aspect of the party's success<sup>26</sup>. I only discuss the finances of the party as it relates to the party's organizational structure and operations.

## § 1.3 Structure of the Thesis

Chapter 2 deals with the theoretical discussions. Mainly, I analyze theories of political party establishments, institutionalization and forms of political parties in the existing literature. After a brief discussion on the party system change from the 1990s to the 2000s, I will explain that the AKP had a major

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26 The Financial resources of the AKP is discussed extensively elsewhere, I do not discuss this topic in my thesis.

effect on the change of party systems in Turkey. This effect shows that the AKP managed to capture the center of the Turkish party system and shifted it to the right. Rather than seeking an explanation of the AKP's internal structure based on political party literature, which accepted functions of political parties as 'derivative', De Leon et al's arguments of political articulation, and the integral party model which argues that some parties have a 'constitutive' role, fits with the AKP<sup>27</sup>.

Chapter 3 deals with the history of Turkish political Islam. From the early years of the Turkish Republic until the AKP era, political Islam in Turkey has had three phases: Political Islam as an ideology, which takes place from the establishment of the republic until the end of the 1960s; political Islam as a movement will be explained as the establishment of the Millî Görüş Movement; political Islam as an institutionalized political party will be explained as the establishment of the AKP. In the last part of the chapter the cornerstones of AKP's hegemony will be explained.

Chapters 4 and 5 explain the outcomes of this research. In Chapter 4. the AKP's organizational pillars will be examined. The party's main focus, its organizational model and the party members' basic responsibilities will be detailed and analyzed. I argue that the party has an efficient Weberian type of bureaucratic operation., which I label as *party machine*. In Chapter 5, I explain the party's relation with the public. This chapter in addition to Chapter 4 shows that the party's operations gave it the capability to create and organize large blocks of society no matter the party's discourse.

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27 Cedric De Leon, Manali Desai, and Cihan Tuğal, *Building Blocs: How Parties Organize Society* (Stanford University Press, 2015), 2.

## From Society to Politics: Varieties of Political Party Structures and Transformative Political Parties

The primary function of political parties is to represent citizens and provide a voice for society at the state level. We may consider labor unions and civil society organizations as structures that also mediate between citizens and the state, but political parties offer a more direct link between government and the governed. Throughout history, parties and their function have changed in a myriad way, but how?

Political parties all over the world differ in their origins due to their unique historical conditions. The British Parliament is the oldest parliament in the world and political parties emerged in the United Kingdom. The modern political party is over 200 years old. Since the political parties are in between the state and society, in one sense the evolution of political parties reflects the evolution of society too.

It has long been discussed that political parties are shaped by various ideologies found within society. Whether or not a party is established within parliament or outside of parliament, it should represent a unique ideological tendency within society, while displaying specific differences with other participating parties. By representing its ideology and followers, the political party would seek to pursue its aims and policies. This is a common definition attributed to Maurice Duverger when he first examined the nature of political parties more than 50 years ago. It should be noted that there are parties that

go beyond the goal of representation; they can actively shape their constituencies with elements of the state and society. In this chapter, I will look at the relevant literature about political parties as representative agents of their constituents, and also as structures that create and subordinate political cleavages within society.

First, I will look at the establishment and institutionalization of political parties, before delving into the different types of organizational models. Next, I will discuss the integral party model because it gives us a new perspective on the study of political parties. I will also explain changes in the Turkish party system from the 1990s to the 2000s in order to understand the effect of party models on the party system change.

## § 2.1 Institutionalization and the Establishment of the Political Parties

### 2.1.1 *The Genetic Mode of Parties*

The establishment and development of a political party is related to its ideology and organization. One cannot separate the organizational development of a party from its institutionalization process. By focusing on a party's organizational development, it is important to observe its genetic model as theorized by Panebianco. He states that the organizational difference of a party is determined by its founders, which makes it unique among other parties in the system<sup>1</sup>. A party's genetic model can affect a party's structure years after its establishment.

Duverger analyzes the establishment process of political parties through two dimensions: External and internal. Internally created parties are formed

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1 Angelo Panebianco, *Political Parties: Organization and Power*. 1988 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, n.d.), 50. "En Düşük Katılımlı Referandum," accessed May 19, 2019, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/en-dusuk-katilimli-referandum-7532868>.

within the parliament, whereas externally created parties are established outside the parliament by different organizations<sup>2</sup>.

In addition, Panebianco proposes that there are three different factors which affect a party's genetic model: The organization's construction and development, the presence or absence of an 'external' sponsor and the role of charisma in the construction of a political party<sup>3</sup>. In terms of the organization's creation and development, it is important to note whether a centralized power penetrates the periphery, or if a local leader manages to create and dominate the party<sup>4</sup>. In the latter, power within the party can be diffused among local branches. In the former, the central authority penetrates the party.

If there is an outside sponsor for the newly established political party, then there might be 'indirect loyalties' of party members to this external sponsor, and the legitimacy of the party leadership might depend on it<sup>5</sup>. In the third factor, Panebianco offers two different models: A leader which has a pure, Weberian type of charisma, and a 'situational charisma' which sends the message that the party is ready for duty<sup>6</sup>.

Following the path of Panebianco, the role of the leader during the establishment of the political party is crucial for maintaining its message, policy priorities and ideology. Panebianco offers two different dimensions for assessing the institutionalization of political parties: 'the organization's degree of autonomy vis a vis its environment' and "the degree of the systemness of the political party"<sup>7</sup>. In Panebianco's model, if a party's organization is autonomous and has a certain degree of systemness, then this party is likely to have more institutionalization<sup>8</sup>.

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- 2 Maurice Duverger, *Political Parties: Their Organization and Activity in the Modern State* (Methuen, 1959).
  - 3 Panebianco, *Political Parties*, 50–52. Angelo Panebianco, *Political Parties: Organization and Power. 1988* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, n.d.), 50–52.
  - 4 Duverger, *Political Parties*, 51.
  - 5 Panebianco, *Political Parties*, 51–52.
  - 6 Panebianco, 52–53.
  - 7 Panebianco, 52–53.
  - 8 Panebianco, 53.

The relation between a party's genetic model and institutionalization is significant: If a party develops through the penetration of a central authority then institutionalization is likely. Development through diffusion leads to weak institutionalization, since the diffusion model offers many different segments the chance to hold power. Secondly, if there is a presence of an external sponsor the party is most likely to have a low level of institutionalization, since the loyalty of party members will go to this sponsor. Similarly, if the party has a strong, charismatic leader, then its institutionalization will be weak as in the external sponsor model<sup>9</sup>.

There is a correlation between a party's institutionalization and its autonomous structure. When a party organization becomes autonomous from its environment, this signals the institutionalization of this political party. If a party is too attached to external organizations, party institutionalization is out of the question. For example, the British labor party is highly attached to labor organizations and unions, especially during the election process<sup>10</sup>.

Candidate selection is regarded as another factor of party institutionalization. According to several scholars, candidate systems in political parties set the party's democratic tendencies, often termed as the 'twin sisters of elections'<sup>11</sup>. According to Rahat, the methodology of candidate selection determines the level of democracy within the political party. Before elections, a party uses several methods to decide who will represent it. In the Turkish party tradition, lists that contain the candidates are usually decided by the leaders or top executives of the party. It is also possible to see instances of clientelism during the candidate selection process before the election. Rahat observes these actions as anti-democratic attempts, since the candidate selection process should also exhibit democratic tendencies for a functioning democracy<sup>12</sup>.

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9 Panebianco, 57.

10 Panebianco, 57.

11 Gideon Rahat, *What Is Democratic Candidate Selection?* (Oxford University Press, 2013), 136–49, <https://www.oxfordscholarship.com/view/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199661879.001.0001/acprof-9780199661879-chapter-9>.

12 Rahat, 145.

As for Rahat, European parties increasingly use methods to include its members in the candidate selection process. In order to increase the representation of women, parties have set quotas for female candidates. Inclusiveness, quotas for women and democratic procedures in candidate selection are seen as important factors of intra-party democracy and the institutionalization of political parties<sup>13</sup>. Scarrow also points out that intra-party democracy goes hand in hand with the candidate selection process of parties<sup>14</sup>.

Scarrow analyzes that membership is an important tool for political parties to have an impact on their capacity for mobilization. According to her, legitimacy, connection to supporters, financial support, volunteer labor and finding potential candidates enable political parties to recruit members<sup>15</sup>. The incentives for citizens to become a party member include the ability to express a political conviction or an idea to a party leader, to learn more about politics, participate in politics, gain social benefits and/or economic benefits<sup>16</sup>.

## § 2.2 Types of Party Organizational Models: Elite, Mass and Catch-all Parties

The Elite Party: During the early development of parliaments in the west, parliament members themselves were leaders of political parties. Local party networks were not necessary, unless there was an election campaign. Even if there was an election process, the local organization consisted of the relatives, friends or networks of elite representatives or leaders. In this type of political organization, there is a close link between elites and local people. Since the

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13 Rahat, 155.

14 Susan E. Scarrow, *Political Parties and Democracy in Theoretical and Practical Perspectives: Implementing Intra-Party Democracy* (National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, 2005), 7.

15 Scarrow, 13.

16 Scarrow, 14.

main members and leaders are the elites, the elite party's resources are independent from a central authority, which makes the party weak<sup>17</sup>.

The Mass Party: When suffrage expanded in Europe, the increasing number of electorates created the need for more organized local branches and more communication between party leadership and local organizations. New conditions for mass suffrage changed the situation for a candidate from a bourgeois party in order to win votes. The most important aspect of the mass party is that the central office supplies enough resources for the expansion and organization of local offices, which in turn support the central office with necessary tools and mobilization for electoral success. Whether the party was created as an 'umbrella' organization is irrelevant; the central office and the party's organization have a relationship of co-dependence. In this model, the party in the central office is elected by its members for maintaining leadership, creating ideology and 'making rules' for the local party's organization. In the elite party, the local organization was a tool for anybody elected, yet in the mass party, the relation between MPs and the local organization continue even after the election. When the party organizational model evolved to the mass party, subcultures within parties became more dominant. Universal suffrage was an outcome of the mass party model's success. These two models, the mass party and the elite party, were precursors to the catch-all party model<sup>18</sup>.

The Catch-all Party: In the elite party model, the central office is the powerful branch and in the mass party model, the local branches and the central party office share power, since party leaders are elected by their members. An important feature of the catch-all party is that its ideology is not so important, because the party seeks votes from different segments of society, while party leadership creates policies catered for these distinct segments<sup>19</sup>.

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17 Richard Katz and Peter Mair, "The Ascendancy of the Party in Public Office: Party Organizational Change in Twentieth-Century Democracies, U: Gunther," *Montero/Linz 2002* (2002): 113-135.

18 Katz and Mair.

19 Richard Katz and Peter Mair, "The Ascendancy of the Party in Public Office: Party Organizational Change in Twentieth-Century Democracies, U: Gunther," *Montero/Linz 2002* (2002): 113-135. Katz and Mair.

Katz and Mair suggest that the European party system went beyond the catch-all party model and settled conflicts over time. They identified those parties as ‘electoral professional parties’ or ‘modern cadre parties’<sup>20</sup>.

In addition to the organizational models described, Scarrow has five categories of parties: Leader dominant, notables parties, individual representation parties, corporatist representation parties and democratic based parties<sup>21</sup>.

But I claim that these terms and models are not sufficient to understand the evolution of Islamist parties in Turkey, even if the catch-all party model is the most similar model for the Turkish AKP.

### § 2.3 The Constitutive Role of Political Parties: Integral Parties

In their book, *Building Blocs: How Parties Organize Society*, Cedric De Leon, Melani Desai and Cihan Tuğal argue that since the 1940s, ‘individual vote choice’ has been explained through social cleavages like ‘class’ and ‘ethnicity’. This means that a person votes with respect to their social group or identity<sup>22</sup>. From this point, the authors argue that political parties are ‘seeking to mobilize the sum of such choices’ for success in elections such as representation in parliament. In short, parties are a reflection of ‘social divisions’ at the political level. On the other hand, critical scholars assert that ‘leaders’ and ‘political elites’ are ‘usurpers’ of popular votes. In this account, political parties do not express social divisions, but rather serve the desires of leaders and the political elites that surround them<sup>23</sup>.

After offering different perspectives about the function of political parties, De Leon et. al argue that at certain times, political parties serve a different role

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20 Katz and Mair.

21 Scarrow, *Political Parties and Democracy in Theoretical and Practical Perspectives*, 15.

22 Cedric De Leon, Manali Desai, and Cihan Tuğal, *Building Blocs: How Parties Organize Society* (Stanford University Press, 2015), 2–3. Cedric De Leon, Manali Desai, and Cihan Tuğal, *Building Blocs: How Parties Organize Society* (Stanford University Press, 2015), 2–3. De Leon, Desai, and Tuğal, *Building Blocs*, 2–3.

23 De Leon, Desai, and Tuğal, 2–3.

when considering ‘politics as constitutive rather than derivative’<sup>24</sup>. This means that parties do not merely reflect social divisions or serve their leaders, but parties are ‘the most influential agencies that structure social change’<sup>25</sup>. In De Leon et. al’s conceptualization, ‘ethnoreligious’, ‘economic’ and ‘gender differences’ which create cleavages do not have political value on their own. Rather, those differences or cleavages are meaningful when parties create them. The authors call this phenomenon ‘political articulation’, defined as “the process by which parties’ ‘suture’ together coherent blocs and cleavages from a disparate set of constituencies and individuals, who, even by virtue of sharing circumstances, may not necessarily share the same political identity”<sup>26</sup>.

De Leon et. al also claim that some parties can create a bloc which enables people who have different political attitudes to come together. By dominating and leading this bloc, political parties can find an opportunity to change society as well as the state. One of the key assumptions of ‘political articulation’ is that although some parties can manage this operation, others cannot. There are examples of both successful political articulation and failed attempts. When parties operate ‘political articulation’, they use different ‘means of articulation’ including ‘state’ and ‘non-state’ instruments for ‘politicizing social differences’<sup>27</sup>. These instruments can be sorted like: ‘rhetoric’, ‘public policy’, ‘official state and paramilitary violence’, ‘appointing an insurgent leader to high office’, ‘provision of social services and infrastructure’, and ‘changing constitutional rules’<sup>28</sup>. Political parties can bring together different parts of society like religious and ethnic groups, or classes that do not share the same political attitudes, essentially coalitions that and would come apart in any other circumstance. Even if links between different social groups do not exist, parties can manage to bring these groups under one ‘bloc’<sup>29</sup>.

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24 De Leon, Desai, and Tuğal, 2–3.

25 De Leon, Desai, and Tuğal, 2.

26 De Leon, Desai, and Tuğal, 2.

27 De Leon, Desai, and Tuğal, 3.

28 De Leon, Desai, and Tuğal, 3–4.

29 De Leon, Desai, and Tuğal, 26–27.

In order to understand how parties, accomplish this, it is important to analyze how political articulation is expressed. The concept of ‘political articulation’ is embedded in the term ‘hegemony’ which is the ‘active participation of broader strata in the making of their own subordination’<sup>30</sup>. By doing this, the same strata also accept the common ‘inequalities (like economic, gender, racial) and institutions (like state or party) as natural’<sup>31</sup>. This process has two dynamics: 1) the members of this ‘strata’ identify themselves with current hegemony, and 2) they do not spontaneously give consent. When political parties operate within this process, then ‘political articulation’ comes apart. The party that attempts to reconcile this process is called an ‘integral party’<sup>32</sup>.

In chapter 3 of the book, the writers argue that the Turkish Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (AKP) is a successful example of an integral party model. Since its foundation in 2001, the AKP has successfully managed to bring different segments of society together and since 2002, it has generated single party governments through general elections. The AKP has been able to create, dissolve and generate new structures on economy, state and society. It has a unique ideology (or discourse) which speaks for both the center and the right.

This thesis is an attempt to add the effect of the organizational structures in the integral party model. In other words, this study tries to find an answer to effect of the party organization on the political articulation. AKP is introduced as the successful case of an integral party model. Looking at its organizational structure reveals that it has a successful organization. This thesis also tries to answer the effect of party organization’s effect on the political articulation.

The party organizations effect on the political articulation came from the status of the political parties. De Leon et al. claims that the political parties have access to the state apparatuses in all kinds of the societies, democratic & undemocratic, and in this way, they have an opportunity for implementing

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30 De Leon, Desai, and Tuğal, 27.

31 De Leon, Desai, and Tuğal, 27.

32 De Leon, Desai, and Tuğal, 27.

political articulation<sup>33</sup>. However, they do not put great importance on the organizational work of the political parties. The emphasis on their analysis is on the ‘creative potential of the political parties’<sup>34</sup>. This creative potential leads us to the AKP’s organizational dynamics.

It is known that the Milli Gorus parties have been effective on the grass-roots organizations. The success of the Milli Gorus in 1990s mostly based upon their work done in the streets which will be explained in the next chapter deeply. Since the AKP also have an effective grassroots organization and since its establishment and success story are related with the mass support from the below, it is a necessity to look at the organizational dynamics of the AKP to explain its ability to carry political articulation. In other words, the AKP has access to the state’s means and apparatuses to implement political articulation. It is argued that the AKP is a successful model for the political articulation which makes it the integral party. From these points, this thesis focuses on the party’s organizational dynamics to understand its effect on the AKP’s long time hegemony and tenure in the Turkish politics.

According to one study conducted by Ersin Kalaycıoğlu after the 2007 general elections, the AKP shifted from centrist politics to the right. To understand this shift better, I will explain the Turkish party system change from the 1990s to the 2000s to analyze the effect of the AKP on Turkish politics<sup>35</sup>.

## § 2.4 The Turkish Party System in the 1990s

In the 1990s, the Turkish parliament was largely comprised of five parties that held approximately equal parliamentary power. Because of this, ‘coalition governments’ were the only solution for forming government. In the left-right ideological scale, there were extreme-left, center-left, center-right and far-

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33 Cedric de Leon, Manali Desai, and Cihan Tuğal, eds., *Building Blocs: How Parties Organize Society* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2015), 4.

34 De Leon, Desai, and Tuğal, *Building Blocs*, 2.

35 Ersin Kalaycıoğlu, “Justice and Development Party at the Helm: Resurgence of Islam or Res-titution of the Right-of-Center Predominant Party?,” *Turkish Studies* 11, no. 1 (2010): 29–44.

right parties in parliament. The general outlook of the party system and voter preferences demonstrated that the party system was highly fragmented<sup>36</sup>.

Apart from the fragmentation of the party system in Turkey during the 1990s, the party system was also 'highly polarized'<sup>37</sup>. The main source of polarization was the conflict between 'secularism' and 'Islamism'. Polarization was not a new term for politics in Turkey, since the Turkish party system was polarized along the left and the right during the 1970s. In the 1990s, the conflict between Islamists and secularists emerged in the system<sup>38</sup>.

Throughout the 1990s, most center-left and center-right parties formed the government and governed the country. The important point is that a far-right Islamist Party, Refah Partisi (RP), increased its influence on the system by winning in the 1995 general elections. To understand this phenomenon, it is important to see the other features of the party system in Turkey. Specifically, the collapse of the center bloc was significant for the Islamists' increasing impact.

It is often argued that the centrist parties lost their ground during the 1990s, and that the Islamist movement benefited from this trend to find a place in the system. The Islamist RP and its successor Fazilet Partisi (FP) were important elements of the system. After the Constitutional Court banned the RP, the movement lost its strength in the general elections. Yet, they were still powerful in the 1999 local elections<sup>39</sup>. In the 1990s, the system lacked a political elite that could protect the interests of the center<sup>40</sup>.

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- 36 Frank Tachau, "Turkish Political Parties and Elections: Half a Century of Multiparty Democracy," *Turkish Studies* 1, no. 1 (2000): 143; Ali Çarkoğlu, "The Geography of the April 1999 Turkish Elections," *Turkish Studies* 1, no. 1 (2000): 166.
- 37 Sabri Sayari, Yılmaz Esmer, and Yılmaz R. Esmer, *Politics, Parties, and Elections in Turkey* (Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2002), 20.
- 38 Sayari, Esmer, and Esmer, 20.
- 39 Sayari, Esmer, and Esmer, 19; Ayşe Ayata, "Ethnic and Religious Bases of Voting," *Politics, Parties and Elections in Turkey*, 2002, 137; U" mit Cizre-Sakallioğlu and Erinç Yeldan, "Politics, Society and Financial Liberalization: Turkey in the 1990s," *Development and Change* 31, no. 2 (2000): 501.
- 40 Ersin Kalaycioğlu, "Elections and Party Preferences in Turkey: Changes and Continuities in the 1990s," *Comparative Political Studies* 27, no. 3 (1994): 407.

The Islamist parties were able to have an increasing impact because they had more and more access to economic resources. In the 1990s, capital from Turkey's Anatolian provinces gathered around business clubs. One such club was called the Anatolian Tigers, which gave its support to Islamist parties and their main objective was 'battling' against the harmful effect of the existing order on society rather than just criticizing it<sup>41</sup>.

In the 1995 elections, the RP won 21.4 percent of the popular vote, which meant 30 percent of the parliamentary seats. RP was the first party in the election, after which two center-right parties, the Anavatan Partisi (ANAP) and the Doğru Yol Partisi (DYP), established a government with nearly 45 percent of the parliamentary seats. Yet, in a short span of time this coalition broke and the DYP went to coalition with the RP. Before this coalition, Tansu Çiller, the leader of the DYP, declared that she would never make a coalition with the RP because of its Islamist discourse; however, the two parties struck a deal. In response, the RP abandoned its support for a parliamentary investigation of Çiller on corruption charges<sup>42</sup>. In their coalition government, the leader of the RP, Necmettin Erbakan, wished to be in government for 'legitimizing' its religious party on behalf of the people and the state elite. For Çiller, it was about escaping corruption charges<sup>43</sup>.

The party system in Turkey has been affected by the military through several interventions, especially the 1980 coup d'état. The military junta invented a system, which they believed incorporated two centrist parties and excluded the Islamist, leftist and ultra-nationalist parties<sup>44</sup>. Apart from the institutional arrangements set up by the military, they also made a direct intervention in Turkish politics in 1997. In the National Security Council Meeting, the military

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41 Cizre-Sakallioğlu and Yeldan, "Politics, Society and Financial Liberalization," 501.

42 Tachau, "Turkish Political Parties and Elections," 141.

43 Metin Heper and E. Fuat Keyman, "Double-Faced State: Political Patronage and the Consolidation of Democracy in Turkey," *Middle Eastern Studies* 34, no. 4 (1998): 270.

44 Sayari, Esmer, and Esmer, *Politics, Parties, and Elections in Turkey*, 15.

forced the government to make reforms to block the increasing effect of Islamists<sup>45</sup>. After the 28th February period, the role of the army in politics increased. The army would not accept any effort which might bring the FP, the successor of the RP, to government. To prevent this, the army did not refrain from any discussion in politics. The efforts of the military led politics to a ‘power game’ in which the military was very active<sup>46</sup>.

## § 2.5 The Turkish Party System in the 2000s

After the 2002 elections, the party system changed dramatically in Turkey. The newly established AKP won the elections with a critical electoral support and a parliamentary majority. The AKP was able to form a single party government, and because of the 10 percent threshold, many parties could not be in parliament even if they had popular support. There was just one other party in parliament which was Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi (CHP). Until 2007, there was a two-party system in Turkey. One important note is that popular votes characterized the system despite the military’s attempts. In other words, military intervention which accelerated after the 28th February process eventually lost its momentum<sup>47</sup>.

The party system was renewed during the 2000s. The political agenda and leaders were transformed. Before the 2002 general elections if a party lost in an election, it had the chance to succeed in another one. Yet, the losers of the 2002 elections were also the losers of the 2007 elections, and the AKP won elections by increasing its popular vote base. After the 2007 elections, there were four main blocs in the parliament: Pro-Islamist AKP, center-left CHP, far-right Nationalist MHP and the pro-Kurdish bloc<sup>48</sup>. The AKP managed to

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45 Frank Tachau, “An Overview of Electoral Behavior: Toward Protest or Consolidation of Democracy?,” 2002, 50.

46 Cizre-Sakallioğlu and Yeldan, “Politics, Society and Financial Liberalization,” 497.

47 Metin Heper and Sabri Sayari, *The Routledge Handbook of Modern Turkey* (Routledge, 2012), 188.

48 Heper and Sayari, 189.

incorporate a new center-right bloc, since the DYP and ANAP, the main political powers of the 1990s, no longer had their roots both in public and in the parliament. At the end, predominant party system was emerged thanks to the AKP's effect. Prominent political scientists described this situation as when the 'Turkish center shifted to the right'<sup>49</sup>. The party system also became more stable when compared to the 1990s. Single party governments, stable voter choices, and a low degree of fragmentation defined the party system of the 2000s.

The newly established AKP had a dramatic effect on the party system in Turkey. On the one hand, the AKP is a new party, but it was established in the country's thirty-year lineage of political Islam. The question here is what are the continuities and changes between AKP and its Islamist predecessors? For the purpose of this thesis, the organizational differences and similarities are significant. Before making an in-depth analysis, it is important to understand the relation between the establishment and institutionalization of political Islam in Turkey.

## § 2.6 The Turkish Party System in the 2010s

The results of the 2007 general elections mark a turning point in Turkey. AKP consolidated its electoral support and continued its single party government with a majority in the parliament. In terms of the party systems, there was another party in the parliament, MHP. MHP was the only party from the 1990s that could not pass the 10% threshold and after that could get enough support into the parliament. There was also Kurdish bloc which successfully created a group within the parliament. However, the party of the Kurdish political movement did not attend the elections as a political party since there was a possibility to be under the 10% threshold. On the contrary, they attended the election as independent candidates and after the election, they formed their political group in the parliament. After the 2007 general elections, there were

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49 Ali Carkoglu and Ersin Kalaycioglu, "Turkish Democracy Today," *IB Tauris, London*, 2007, 113.

four parties in the parliament, but the system is described as the predominant party system.

The reason that the party system is considered as predominant party system is that AKP was the main power in the government and the parliament<sup>50</sup>. Holding executive and legislative powers ensured the party's power on politics. In addition to that AKP elected Abdullah Gül as the president and through this one of the major opposition blocs against the AKP handled. In terms of all social and political issue, AKP had the absolute power. Before the next general election, there was one local election and one referendum between 2007 and 2011.

In 2009 local election AKP won the mayorships of big cities but lost a great portion of its public support. Even if the party holds 39% of votes, 2009 elections are considered as its major losses. The 2010 referendum on the constitution was a major turning point in modern Turkish politics. The 2010 referendum led AKP to become more powerful on the judiciary. Before the 2011 general election, AKP held major institutions that affect Turkish politics: Government, parliament, judiciary, civil bureaucracy, and the presidency. One can say that the military is also effective on the politics in Turkey for decades but after 2011 AKP's landslide victory in the elections, the generals resigned from office. After 2011 it was obvious that AKP had no major rivalry on the politics. Between 2011 and 2013 were the years that AKP had no real challenge in politics. One can say that those years were the absolute picture of the AKP's hegemony. A saturation point for the more than a hundred years of Islamism in Turkey. In the late 1990s, no one could estimate that once Islamists would capture all critical seats in Turkish politics. After two years of politics without any rivalry, in 2013 the party system in Turkey faced critical events. It is widely accepted that June 2013 Street protests started to down of the AKP's hegemony. That was also the year when economic indicators went down. Later in that year, AKP started a war with Fetullah Gulen's secret organization, once an important ally of the AKP. The government called them as FETO, Fetullahist Terrorist Organization. The war between AKP and FETO has been in the center

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50 F. Michael Wuthrich, *National Elections in Turkey: People, Politics, and the Party System* (Syracuse University Press, 2015), 251.

of Turkish politics since then. On 15 July 2016, a group of military officers started a coup attempt against the government. The coup plotters were identified as the members of the FETO.

What we have to understand about the post-2011 period is that everything was related with the AKP in that period. The party arguably reached the peak of its power between 2011 and 2013. During these terms, AKP also had significant media support which led them only significant power, voice, and effect in the politics. The increasing effect of the party, legislations that the party passed, and discourses of the party leaders led it to be criticized as having authoritative tendencies. After the July 2016 coup attempt, the degree of authority increased distinctively. The discourse that the party adopted after the 2011 period was contrary to its established principles. Party started to lose its democratic voice and use an Islamist discourse. The foreign policy of AKP governments after the 2011 period also affected its neo-Islamist discourse and policy agenda. After the 2015 June, elections party also adopted nationalist discourse. Now what we have is an Islamist-nationalist authoritarian party rather than a pioneer of Muslim democracy in the Middle East.

The interesting part is that throughout the years that the AKP turned into an Islamist-nationalist party from Muslim democrat (at least at the discursive level) the party never lost its public support. Just in June 2015 elections party lost nearly 10 percent of its actual votes. However, in November reelection the party won nearly 50 percent of the votes. It should be noted that President Erdoğan and the AKP stretched the customs of Turkish politics for reelection in Turkey. Nevertheless, the AKP did not lose any election.

This chapter reflects the importance of the political parties in the politics. Integral party theorists put importance on the role of the political parties. The political parties are in between state and society. In terms of integral party perspective, political parties have accesses to the state apparatuses and by using state power they can generate political articulation. At the end of this a long hegemony of a political party or a group over its society could be seen. In this respect, the AKP is seen as the successful case for the integral party. In this chapter I tried to explain the functions of the political party based on the existing literature. On the other hand, the integral party and its characteristics

also explained. The basic difference of the integral party is considering political parties 'constitutive' rather than 'derivative'<sup>51</sup>. In line of this theory, the history of the Turkish party systems from 1990s to the 2010s is explained through this angle. In other words, the AKP is considered as a *constitutive* political party and its effect on the Turkish party systems shows the outcomes of the political articulation that the AKP created.

For understanding the effect of the AKP and the cornerstones of the AKP's hegemony, in the next chapter, I will analyze the history of political Islam in Turkey and the establishment of the AKP's long hegemony in Turkey. In a nutshell this theoretical chapter delves into the characteristics of the political articulation and integral party. The next chapter will explain the components of the AKP's hegemony. These two chapters are crucial to put the base for the last two chapters which aims to show the effect of the organizational work on the AKP's domination on the Turkish politics.

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51 De Leon, Desai, and Tuğal, *Building Blocs*, 2.



## From Ideology to Political Party: History of Political Islam in Turkey

This chapter aims to survey the historical evolution of political Islam in Turkey during the 20th century. The main focus of this thesis is to understand the evolution of political Islam in Turkey from an ideology to a social movement and later to a political party. Framing the characteristics of political Islam from the early years of the republic until today is crucial for this chapter.

The aim of this chapter is to show the historical background of the AKP's hegemony. What are the components of the AKP's hegemony? How AKP managed to bring these different segments of the society together? This chapter both shows the evolution of the political Islam and the cornerstones of AKP's hegemony. Generally, it shows that how AKP turned itself center political party from a political Islamist one. In addition to this AKP's policy orientations to hold the blocs that it created will be explained. Especially the effect of the construction sector and real estate will be analyzed based on the current literature.

### § 3.1 Political Islam as an Ideology in Turkey

Şerif Mardin argues that political Islam in Turkey is as old as Turkish modernity. According to Mardin, since the 18th century, Ottoman bureaucracy had adopted a 'positivist' approach, which scattered Islamists who lost their power

with respect to both institutionalist and ideological matters. He believes that the Ottoman Empire accepted that the knowledge produced in the West as legitimate. As the modernization process materialized at the state level, the Nakşibendi Sufi Order operated at the social level as an autonomous entity. In other words, Ottomans adopted Western style of 'institution building' which eventually led to the establishment of the Turkish Republic; however, the continuity of this modernization 'praxis' was 'ruptured' by the Nakşibendi Sufi Order. On the one hand, the state (especially during the Turkish Republic) desired to take control of every sphere including religion. On the other hand, the autonomous character of the Nakşibendi Sufi Order shaped Islam in Turkey. The state's attempt to control the religious sphere, as well as the autonomous Sufi order, characterize the unique nature of Turkish Islam, differentiating from Arab Islam. Mardin calls this 'Turkish Islamic 'exceptionalism'<sup>1</sup>.

The Nakşibendi Sufi Order was established by Bhattin Nakşibendi who lived in the 16th century. The Nakşibendi Order arrived in Anatolia by Sheik Mavlana Khalid el-Bagdadi who was appointed to represent the Ottoman territories. Bagdadi declared that Muslims were following the wrong 'path' because of its rulers, and asked for the restoration of the Sunna, referring to the modernization process of the Ottoman Empire. Since Nakşibendis were more 'Orthodox', the ulema who had lost power favored the ideas of the Nakşibendis against the Baktāşis' 'heterodox' approach. Throughout the 19th century, Nakşibendis can find an opportunity to make their propaganda, but when the Turkish Republic was established, they retreated underground in society. During the establishment period, the ulema also completely lost its institutional power.

The modernization attempts of the Ottoman elites eventually led to the establishment of the Turkish Republic. The establishment process and the ideologies of the republic's founders designate the character of the republic, which also affected the character of Turkish Islam. The Turkish Republic was established in 1923 by Ottoman military officers after the Independence War;

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1 Şerif Mardin, Turkish Islamic Exceptionalism Yesterday and Today: Continuity, Rupture and Reconstruction in Operational Codes. *Turkish Studies*, 6(2), (2005), 145-165: 148

their leader was Mustafa Kemal who was educated in modern Ottoman military schools like other founders.

### 3.1.1 *The Secular Character of Turkish Modernity and the Turkish Republic*

The Kemalist ideology shapes the characteristics of the Turkish Republic. Its main goal was ‘strengthening its power’ and ‘putting a radical modernization and secularization program’ in place, and because of this, demolishing the Ottoman legacy was important<sup>2</sup>. Moreover, the republican ideology had harsh measures against internal threats to its power, such as Muslim identity.

The Kemalist project tried to create an ‘ideal citizen’ which first of all, should be a Turk. In order to become a Turk, one must also be Muslim, which was influenced by the state. The founders of the Turkish Republic established the Directorate of Religious Office (DRO), Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı, which was connected to the government<sup>3</sup>. This was the way for creating an ideal Islam to produce ideal ‘Turkish’ citizens. The Kemalist project which aimed to make a Westernized, secularized and modern nation led to the ‘marginalization’ of main religious groups in politics and society<sup>4</sup>.

In line with Mardin’s argument, the Nakşibendi Sufi Order managed to continue at the social level. Sufi orders were prohibited from the public sphere and politics. In the early years of Turkish Republic, there was a religious revolt against the secular measures of the state led by some members of the Nakşibendi Order<sup>5</sup>. This was called The Menemen incident and it revealed two

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- 2 Erik Jan Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History*, 3rd ed (London ; New York: I.B. Tauris, 2004), 172; Jeffrey Haynes, “Politics, Identity and Religious Nationalism in Turkey: From Atatürk to the AKP,” *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 64, no. 3 (2010): 312.
  - 3 Menderes Çınar and Burhanettin Duran, “The Specific Evolution of Contemporary Political Islam in Turkey and Its ‘Difference,’” 2007, 22; PINAR TANK, “Political Islam in Turkey: A State of Controlled Secularity,” *Turkish Studies* 6, no. 1 (January 1, 2005): 287, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1468384042000339294>.
  - 4 Berna Turam, *Between Islam and the State: The Politics of Engagement* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2007), 6.
  - 5 Umur Azak, *Islam and Secularism in Turkey: Kemalism, Religion and the Nation State* (IB Tauris, 2010), 22.

important points: First, the incident could be considered as an evidence of Mardin's conceptualization; second, revolting against the state was the only way for Islamists to politically express themselves during the early years of the Turkish Republic<sup>6</sup>.

The Turkish state had a desire for absolute control over religion. The actions of the founding father, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, differed from the Soviets, who for example, planned to wipe away religion from society. Turks, on the other hand, wanted to control religion, and thus established the Directorate of Religious Affairs. Muslim identity in and of itself was not a problem, but it should be state structured and controlled. Surprisingly, many Sufi leaders who could save themselves from the initial suppression of religious orders became state sponsored officials in the DRA. They were paid by the state, but they continued to secretly exercise their ideology.

### 3.1.2 *Islamists During the Multi-party Regime*

Up until 1945, Turkey was a single party regime, since attempts to make a multi-party environment failed. After 1945, the opponents of the republic could find space to participate in politics, yet this participation was also limited. After 1950, the Democrat Party started to rule the republic. Although they were bound by Kemalist ideology, they were different from the bureaucratic authority dating back to Ottoman modernization<sup>7</sup>. They had different approaches to politics (especially in economic issues), and since the constituents and supporters were from different segments of society, the Democrat Party also had a more moderate attitude with regard to religion. So Turkish Islam could find some freedom during governments led by the Democrat Party. However, this freedom was very limited and direct Islamist influence at the political level did not exist. Islamists, especially Sufi orders, had an option to participate in politics by supporting a political party with some distance from Kemalist bureaucratic ideology. The basic political strategy for Sufi orders during the multi-party era till the late 1960s was to vote for more conservative

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6 TANK, "Political Islam in Turkey," 289.

7 Feroz Ahmad, *The Making of Modern Turkey*, The Making of the Middle East Series (London ; New York: Routledge, 2000), 103.

parties and select community members as MPs and ministers. At this point, another religious order should be mentioned: The Nur Movement.

The Nur Movement originated from the Nakşibendi Order, but its founder, Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, had a different interpretation of Islam. Indeed, the Nur Movement is very significant for understanding both Islamism in Turkey and Turkish politics. There are many dimensions for discussing the effect of the Nur Movement, but I will discuss the Nur Movement in relation to the Milli Gorus Movement. The Nur Movement emerged as a ‘resistance’ to Kemalist modernization. Said Nursi was educated according to the Nakşibendi tradition, but he had some criticisms. The main difference between him and the Nakşibendi tradition was his emphasis on the reinterpretation of Islam with respect to ‘reason’ and ‘science’ since they were the arbiter concepts of his time.

The important point here is that Said Nursi supported the Democrat Party during the multi-party regime against the Republican People’s Party, which was responsible for the establishment of the Kemalist bureaucratic ideology. Nursi believed that any party that unites the nation should be supported by Muslims. Followers of the Nur tradition also supported Süleyman Demirel’s Adalet Partisi (AP). They believed that Demirel was the successor to Adnan Menderes who was the leader of the center right during 50s<sup>8</sup>. Nakşibendi orders also supported the DP tradition. In this period, we can say that supporting a right wing party was a political strategy for Islamists during the multi-party regime.

### § 3.2 The Establishment of the Milli Gorus: Political Islam as a Movement

With the more liberal 1960 constitution, the political arena allowed a greater plurality of parties, which enabled political Islam to become institutionalized. The Islamist Milli Gorus Movement was established by Necmettin Erbakan with the support of tarikats such as the Nakşibendi Sufi order. The Milli Nizam

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8 Birol A. Yeşilada, “The Virtue Party,” *Turkish Studies* 3, no. 1 (2002): 64.

Partisi (MNP) was the first organization by which the Sufi orders were represented in the political realm. When MNP was closed by the military regime in 1971, the Milli Selamet Partisi (MSP) was established by its founders.

One of the important characteristics of Milli Gorus Movement was that it represented small, independent businessmen, merchants and craftsmen who felt threatened by industrialization in Anatolia. It was the reason why Necmettin Erbakan founded a new party, rather than attend to the AP headed by Süleyman Demirel and supported by the Istanbul bourgeoisie.

Another important element of MNP's establishment was the relationship between the party's founders and the Nakşibendi Sufi order. Mardin argues that Necmettin Erbakan's MNP is the first one in Turkey which has strong 'clerical views'<sup>9</sup>.

The Milli Gorus Movement was related with religious groups that denied attempts at Westernization. From this point, İhsan Dağı argues that considering the West as an enemy was a crucial aspect of the Milli Gorus<sup>10</sup>. According to him, the West was perceived as 'evil' by the Milli Gorus. At this point, he claimed that Islamist identity was constructed as against Western identity. In other words, Islamist identity was conceived as the 'other' of the West<sup>11</sup>. This trend was also true for the Islamists during the 1990s in which they could gain considerable political success.

Nilufer Narlı in her book analyzes Malaysian Muslim women during the 'resurgence of Islam' in the early 1970s. According to her, secularized Muslim countries face a resurgence of Islam in which Islam turns into a 'political ideology'. Movements that claimed Islam as a political ideology represent the

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- 9 Şerif Mardin, "Turkish Islamic Exceptionalism Yesterday and Today: Continuity, Rupture and Reconstruction in Operational Codes," *Turkish Studies* 6, no. 2 (January 1, 2005): 155, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14683840500119478>.
- 10 İhsan Dağı, "Transformation of Islamic Political Identity in Turkey: Rethinking the West and Westernization," *Turkish Studies* 6, no. 1 (2005): 26.
- 11 Dağı, 28.

masses who had ‘discontent with the political regime’, ‘demand political participation’ and had ‘economic frustrations’<sup>12</sup>. She also describes these movements into two categories: Fundamentalists that seek Sunni orthodoxy against western modernity, and radicals who desire a revolutionary action on behalf of Islam<sup>13</sup>. In this case, we can put the Milli Gorus Movement in the fundamentalist category.

### 3.2.1 *The Neoliberal Transformation of Turkey*

The Turkish economy has faced many transformations, passing from the liberal economic policy regime (1950s) to the protectionist import substitution policy regime (1960s and 1970s). After the 1961 constitution, the idea of a planned economy had been the agenda of Turkey’s economic development policy. National developmentalism means that the mixture of the market and the state can provide an environment for the economy to grow. The state’s intervention in market failures was the key component of the developmentalist model. In this type of model, a special bureaucracy was responsible for implementing developmentalist policies and big industrialists are key actors.

After the collapse of the Import Substituting Industrialization (ISI) system, the Turkish economy underwent a transformation from national developmentalism to global neoliberalism in the 1980s. The 24th January Decisions were a turning point in the history of the Turkish economy. Before the military takeover, on January 24, 1980, the government headed by Süleyman Demirel took important measures to make the Turkish economy compatible with neoliberal mentality.

During this period, external influences like the IMF and the World Bank became important actors in shaping the economy. Privatization was also a key policy. The aim was to reduce the state’s effect and e turn the market into an arbiter of the economy. The logic was that the government’s effect on the economy led to its failure, not market circumstances, and because of this, there

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12 Nilüfer Narlı, *Unveiling the Fundamentalist Women: A Case Study of University Students in Malaysia* (Isis Press, 1991), 1.

13 Narlı, 2.

should be complete liberalization and privatization of the economy. In this period, ‘expert-oriented industrialists’ became important actors, as well as small and medium industrialists who were small merchants in Anatolia<sup>14</sup>.

After the 1980 military coup, all political parties were closed down by military rule including the Milli Selamet Partisi of the Milli Gorus. Being a member of a political party was banned for old politicians, including the leaders of the MSP. After the 1987 referendum, they gained their political rights and political Islam was able to find a place in Turkish politics under the newly opened RP; Necmettin Erbakan became its leader.

The transformation of the Turkish economy defined the 1980s. Another important characteristic of this time was that, according to some arguments, the military embraced the so-called ‘Turkish-Islamist’ synthesis to hold off leftist ideologies in Turkey<sup>15</sup>. Generals who ordered the 1980 military coup were considered to uphold this understanding.

### § 3.3 The Rise of the Refah Partisi: Political Islam as a Political Party

During 1980s RP started to organize in big cities. Especially after mid 1980s the migration from rural to urban increased in Turkey. With the effect of this migration slum areas increased in big cities like Istanbul and Ankara. Since 1980 military coup destroyed the leftist organizations in Turkey<sup>16</sup>, RP found an opportunity to increase its effect in the poor neighborhoods in metropol. Sultanbeyli and Ukraine were two important examples in this account. Islamist never lost in these new slum areas since then.

In 1991 general elections mark another important point in the history of political Islam in Turkey. RP made a coalition with MHP (Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi) which is an ultra-nationalist party. With the help of this coalition both

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14 Osman Savaşkan and Ayşe Buğra, *Türkiye’de Yeni Kapitalizm: Siyaset, Din ve İş Dünyası* (İletişim Yayınları, 2018), 89.

15 Savaşkan and Buğra, 85.

16 Cihan Tugal, *The Fall of the Turkish Model: How the Arab Uprisings Brought down Islamic Liberalism* (Verso Books, 2016), 38.

parties could get into the parliament. However, RP had the biggest portion in the success.

The RP continued to increase its votes and won the 1995 general election with 21.38% of votes<sup>17</sup>. Political Islam never had this kind of support during the 70s. The emergence of political Islam is related to many different aspects: The rise of identity politics after the collapse of the Soviet Union, as well as the rise of Islamism across the Muslim world help explain this phenomenon<sup>18</sup>. The Iranian Islamic Revolution in 1979 also had the effect of increasing Islamist tendencies. For the Turkish case, the rise in Islamist capital against secular capital after 1980 was another important factor for the rise of Islamism. An ex-member of the Milli Gorus Movement, then Premier Turgut Ozal's economic policies during 80s had an impact on the increasing amount of Islamist capital accumulation<sup>19</sup>.

According to Navaro-Yashin, Muslim capitalists created their own market for their 'lifestyle' and 'ideology'<sup>20</sup>. They also enhance their capital which flows over to contemporary capitalism. Their market produces for those who do not want to consume 'haram'. 'Young Islamist women' do not prefer to wear 'cheap' Islamic clothes which are 'veil' and 'pardesü'. This signals the creation of an Islamic bourgeoisie. In addition to this, some of the headscarf company's names are 'Tevhid', 'Ihvan' and 'Hak' which are symbols for Islamic ideology. Navaro-Yashin argues that the market for Islamist and secular identities was created in Turkey during the 1990s, and this is a vital point for discussing both identities and politics<sup>21</sup>.

During the 1990s, a Muslim bourgeoisie was constructed, and the Islamist movement could develop with the activities of this group. This class which

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17 "Seçim 1995 - Genel Seçim Sonuçları," accessed July 29, 2019, <https://www.haber-turk.com/secim1995>.

18 Yael Navaro-Yashin, *Faces of the State: Secularism and Public Life in Turkey* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 2002), 81; Jenny B. White, *Islamist Mobilization in Turkey: A Study in Vernacular Politics*, Studies in Modernity and National Identity (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2002), 108.

19 Turam, *Between Islam and the State*, 49; Yeşilada, "The Virtue Party," 77; Haldun Gülalp, "Kimlikler Siyaseti," *Türkiye'de Siyasal İslamın Temelleri. Metis Yayınları, İstanbul*, 2003, 71.

20 Navaro-Yashin, *Faces of the State*, 83.

21 Navaro-Yashin, 90.

consists of Muslim capitalists has many differences from its secularist counterpart. Islamists were just as active as secularist capitalists in the market. Besides the division between Islamists and secularists during the 1990s as Navarro-Yashin argued, there was also the division between the main Islamist movements. Till the 1990s, apart from the Milli Gorus, there was another Islamic movement called the Gülen Movement. The Gülen Movement was established by Fetullah Gülen and adhered to the writings of Said Nursi.

According to Turam, the importance of the Gülen movement was that although Islamism in Turkey is contentious with the secular state ideology, the Gülen movement represents the unification of the state and religion in Turkey<sup>22</sup>. In her ethnographic study, during the 1990s, she met different Islamists. A representative from the RP defended the actual fight against the state system. On the other hand, a person from the Gülen movement defended the fight against the system within the system. In other words, capturing the system was the Gulenists basic motivation against members of the RP who would like to take down the system. This reveals a partial peace with religion and the state. Moreover, the struggle between the RP and the Gülen Movement is also very important to understand the nature of Islamism in Turkey. Gülen's actions were always considered as moderate when compared to the radical views of the RP.

In the 1995 general elections, the RP won elections and had the largest number of seats in parliament. The political demands of its components ranged widely, from social and economic reform to replacing the secular state system with one founded in Islamic law.

The success of the RP during the 1990s was the subject of many studies. Investigations about this topic have two different approaches. On the one hand, the issue of the increasing popularity of Islamist identity was investigated. On the other hand, the success of the Welfare Party was often explained through its internal structure. It is argued that the internal organization of the RP was based on a disciplined network of 'activists' and 'volunteers'<sup>23</sup>. Besides this, the party used its power in Imam Hatip Schools, which are theology

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22 Turam, *Between Islam and the State*, 7.

23 Yeşilada, "The Virtue Party," 70.

schools, for their propaganda. Moreover, the parties of this tradition were closed down by the secular state, but they were able to open new parties with the same politicians, but under different names<sup>24</sup>. This led the political Islamist movement to survive in the political arena.

Jenny White's interpretation mixes both of these approaches. She uses the term 'vernacular politics' for explaining the Welfare Party's success with respect to both its organizational structure and social base:

The Islamist movement in Turkey in the 1990s and at the beginning of the twenty-first century is a community- and value-centered political process that, despite its local roots, is able to draw large numbers of people of diverse backgrounds into national politics. I use the term Islamist movement to mean a general mobilization of people around cultural, political, and social issues that are presented and interpreted through Islamic idiom. What I will refer to as an Islamist movement is by no means coherent in organization, ideological interpretation, goal, or method. Like any loosely drawn movement, its aim is to unify people around a shared ideology and social and political goals. Islam is the central idiom to which all participants appeal<sup>25</sup>.

White also argues that people around the Islamist movement do not attach themselves because of a particular ideology or any one type of organization. They get together within a broader Islamist movement because of 'local culture' and 'interpersonal relations', which enable them to make civic and political organizations<sup>26</sup>. Moreover, according to White, Islamist elites tried to create 'higher social 'statuses' in which certain symbols like the veil and gender segregation represent the Islamic movement. For sustaining this distinction from everyday practices, 'they have tried to differentiate Islamist practice as 'conscious' and therefore superior to presumably unconscious adherence to

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24 Yeşilada, 79.

25 White, *Islamist Mobilization in Turkey*, 6.

26 White, 6.

‘tradition’ imputed to local practitioners<sup>27</sup>. They also ‘legitimize themselves with attributing them a genealogy of past Ottoman era’<sup>28</sup>.

According to Cihan Tuğal, the increasing effect of radical, far right parties like the Welfare Party can be explained through the political situation after the 1980 era. Tuğal claims that the military used harsh measures to repress the Turkish left, which weakened leftist politics. Besides this, the fragmented political parties in the center right led the far right Islamists to increase their votes<sup>29</sup>.

The compatibility of Islam and democracy has become a significant topic of discussion among scholars after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Samuel Huntington’s article about this issue inspired others; for example, Binnaz Toprak tried to investigate the Turkish issue. Her analysis investigates whether Turkish Islam is compatible with Western democracy. She uses the achievement of the RP during the 1990s to make her arguments. According to Toprak, generally all Islamist parties, not just the RP, use their rigid ideologies to shape society. Therefore, the apparatuses of the state do not allow them to participate in politics like in 28 February 1980<sup>30</sup>. The remarkable point in her argument is that Islamists should adopt more moderate lines like the Leftists did in Europe for staying within the boundaries of democracy<sup>31</sup>. According to her, this would be the only way for Islam and democracy to be compatible. This is remarkable because Cihan Tuğal argues that the AKP did exactly this to function within the secular state.

As Toprak argues, the secular Turkish state uses some measures for political parties to keep them in the boundaries of republican ideology. One of these measures is party closure. The Constitutional Court closed the RP by accusing it of revolting against the secular character of the republic in 1997. After this closure, the party organized under the Fazilet Partisi (FP) which was also closed down by the Constitutional Court due to the same reason. At this

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27 White, 23.

28 White, 24.

29 De Leon, Desai, and Tuğal, *Building Blocs*, 93.

30 Binnaz Toprak, “Islam and Democracy in Turkey,” *Turkish Studies* 6, no. 2 (2005): 173.

31 Toprak, 184.

point, the movement organized under a new party called the Saadet Partisi (SP) which followed the Milli Gorus' ideas. Yet at the same time, a new party was also established by some members of the Milli Gorus Movement who called themselves reformers and framed the ideology of the new party as conservative democrats<sup>32</sup>. Their party was the Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi established in 2001.

Part of the RP's discourse was Necmettin Erbakan's *Just Order* program. The *Just Order* was a socioeconomic program which promises a society in which there will be no interest, exploitation, unemployment as well as monopoly<sup>33</sup>. According to *Just Order*, the market will be regulated by 'the morality of community'<sup>34</sup>, and according to Tuğal the richer segments of the Islamists rejected the *Just Order* for its socialist tendencies. The poorer side of the Islamists accepted its promises, but they did not fully believe in its possibility. As for Tuğal's analysis, the main difference between Islamists in the early 2000s was demonstrated in their different approaches to the *Just Order* program. Rather than the RP's utopian ideas (left after the party closed down), the AKP accepted more liberal economic policies<sup>35</sup>.

### § 3.4 The Origins of the AKP

The AKP empowered itself as pro-American, pro-European democrats despite its Islamist roots<sup>36</sup>. The existing literature concerning AKP and over its fifteen

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32 Yalçın Akdoğan, *Muhafazakar demokrasi* (Ak Parti, 2003), 6–7, <http://212.174.157.46:8080/xmlui/handle/11543/2633>; Fulya Atacan, "Explaining Religious Politics at the Crossroad: AKP-SP," *Turkish Studies* 6, no. 2 (January 1, 2005): 187, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14683840500119510>.

33 Necmettin Erbakan, *Adil Ekonomik Düzen* (Verlag nicht ermittelbar, 1991), 20; Cihan Tuğal, "Islamism in Turkey: Beyond Instrument and Meaning," *Economy and Society* 31, no. 1 (2002): 105.

34 Necmettin Erbakan, *Adil Ekonomik Düzen* (Verlag nicht ermittelbar, 1991), 14. Erbakan, *Adil Ekonomik Düzen*, 14.

35 Cihan Tuğal, "Islamism in Turkey: Beyond Instrument and Meaning," *Economy and Society* 31, no. 1 (2002): 106. Tuğal, "Islamism in Turkey," 106.

36 Ersin Kalaycıoğlu, "Politics of Conservatism in Turkey," *Turkish Studies* 8, no. 2 (2007): 235.

year history tells us that there are three main characteristics of this party: Conservatism, neoliberalism and populism. These three dimensions have universal and domestic meanings. In this study, I will focus on the domestic meanings and their relation to the AKP. Conservatism is an attribute that prefers the past to the present, available to the possible, the real to the unknown. In conservatism, there is also a religious dimension, however, conservatives are not necessarily religious people. Conservatives mostly try to broaden the scope of religion and morality in society, whether they are in power or in opposition<sup>37</sup>. Conservatives generally want more government control on education, religion and culture, while promoting limited control on the economy. From this point, Kalaycıoğlu conceptualizes conservatism in Turkey that is very similar to Şimşek's definition. First, he claims that there is a lot of popular support for conservatism and that this can be transformed into electoral support<sup>38</sup>. For Turkish conservatives, sociopolitical change should be abandoned or at least postponed. Secondly, conservatism in Turkey is mostly related with Islam and adheres to religious values, social customs and traditions. The importance that is given to traditions is also significant because in the Turkish case, traditionalism is a highly important feature of conservatism<sup>39</sup>. Finally, what is observable in Turkish conservatism is that the emphasis of old against new, past against future, and traditions against modernism. The AKP accepted the conservative democratic ideology during its emergence in political life<sup>40</sup>. Kalaycıoğlu also claims that the AKP is a traditional religious conservative party and also a new vanguard party of the center right in Turkey<sup>41</sup>. The AKP defines its own version of democratic conservatism highlighting secularism, social peace and social justice, the preservation of social values, pluralism, democracy and free market economy. Besides these, it also criticizes the so-

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37 Sefa Şimşek, "Conservative Democracy as a Cosmetic Image in Turkish Politics: The Semiology of AKP's Political Identity," *Turkish Studies* 14, no. 3 (September 1, 2013): 431, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14683849.2013.831258>.

38 Kalaycıoğlu, "Politics of Conservatism in Turkey," 235.

39 Kalaycıoğlu, 236–40.

40 Şimşek, "Conservative Democracy as a Cosmetic Image in Turkish Politics," 431.

41 Kalaycıoğlu, "Politics of Conservatism in Turkey," 234.

called old regime as being despotic, oppressive, imposing, homogenizing and social engineering<sup>42</sup>.

The economic aspect of conservatism in Turkey is worth discussion. Economic change, religiosity and traditionalism seem to belong to the same supporters. Conservative voters in Turkey also have an expectation for improving their welfare standards. It seems that the AKP achieved both, preserving religious and moral values, while making a rapid change in the economy. In terms of its economic policies, the AKP followed regulatory neoliberal policies, which was helped by a proper liquidity environment and thus explains the party's electoral success<sup>43</sup>. Besides its regulatory neoliberal policies, the AKP also uses redistributive policies, and turns an international environment for strong economic support into electoral support<sup>44</sup>. In addition to this, society and politics was manipulated through neoliberal policies, by supporting faith based voluntary associations for welfare provisioning<sup>45</sup>.

AKP style neoliberal policies date back to Kemal Derviş, who was the Minister of Economy before the AKP era. Derviş implemented such policies in which Turkey encountered regulatory neoliberalism with respect to the emerging post-Washington consensus that had resulted in regulatory economic policies and the social failures of free market liberalism<sup>46</sup>. These neoliberal policies, especially the social neoliberalism of the AKP led to its populist discourse. Populism emerged in Turkey right after 1945, and the opposition created a discourse, 'appealing to the people' as a reaction to the CHP<sup>47</sup>. The opposition claimed to be the only representatives of the people and according to Keyder (1987), this is pure populist discourse. There was a class division between the government party and the opposition; the Democrat Party and its class base is one feature of populism in Turkey. Secondly, religion plays a

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42 Ayhan Kaya, "Islamisation of Turkey under the AKP Rule: Empowering Family, Faith and Charity," *South European Society and Politics* 20, no. 1 (2015): 57.

43 Ziya Öniş, "The Triumph of Conservative Globalism: The Political Economy of the AKP Era," *Turkish Studies* 13, no. 2 (2012): 136.

44 Öniş, 137.

45 Kaya, "Islamisation of Turkey under the AKP Rule," 49.

46 Onis, "The Triumph of Conservative Globalism," 140.

47 Çağlar Keyder, *State and Class in Turkey: A Study in Capitalist Development* (Verso, 1987), 120.

very important part in Turkish populism. Keyder also claims that the Democrat Party (which brought populism in Turkey) put a great emphasis on reviving religious attitudes in Turkey against the Republican People's Party, seen as responsible for modernizing and secularizing the country. Before the AKP, many right wing parties used this populist discourse, but the most important one is the (RP), which is predecessor of the AKP<sup>48</sup>. In the 1990s, the RP had both religious and non-religious discourses. As part of its non-religious discourse, RP offered industrialization, social justice and honest government on behalf of the people.

From this point, we can say that combining religious and non-religious discourses within a populist dimension is not just a characteristic of the AKP, but also a feature of its political predecessor. Besides this, the AKP's style was to control populism with respect to its neoliberal and social distributive policies, which contradicted with the policies of previous right wing political parties that typically accompanied boom-bust cycles, economic crisis and the indispensable outcomes of the IMF<sup>49</sup>.

There are many analyses which reflect the difference between two parties. According to Tuğal, with the establishment of the AKP, the anti-systemic discourse of the Islamists disappeared. A branch of the Milli Gorus movement allied with the moderate Islamists who were neo-Nursis, as explained through Umut Azak's ethnography (2010). This alliance made Islamists lose their anti-systemic voice<sup>50</sup>. They became conservative no longer just Islamists, economically liberal no longer anti-capitalist.

### § 3.5 The Cornerstones of AKP's Hegemony: The Patronage Relations of the Governing Party

The AKP has defined its ideology as Conservative Democracy. Yalçın Doğan who was an advisor to Recep Tayyip Erdoğan for a long time wrote AKP's

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48 Kalaycioğlu, "Politics of Conservatism in Turkey," 233.

49 Onis, "The Triumph of Conservative Globalism," 141.

50 Cihan Tuğal, *Passive Revolution: Absorbing the Islamic Challenge to Capitalism* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2009), 10.

conservative democratic ideology in the first years of its establishment. The Conservative democracy is a reminder of Christian Democracy in Europe. The highlight under the conservative democracy is that AKP pledges to follow the rights of conservatives in Turkey but the party does not wish to change the country to an Islamic state. Two important declaration sets the boundaries of the AKP: The conservative democratic ideology and Erdoğan's remarks as "We took off the Milli Görüş Shirt"<sup>51</sup>. In his remarks, he means that they will not follow their old path which is defined by Necmettin Erbakan. With these two remarks, the AKP also created a way for having broader constituents rather than representing a small group of people who follow Milli Gorus' ideology.

For filling the gap in the center of the politics AKP hired politicians from old center parties: Huseyin Çelik from DYP and Erkan Mumcu from ANAP were two important examples for these attempts. With these accomplishments, AKP showed that it will also a candidate for representing the center politics in Turkey not just Islamists or conservatives<sup>52</sup>.

At this point it will be important to delve into the policy priorities and boundaries of AKP's ideology which sets its long hegemony over Turkish society: Cihan Tuğal defines AKP's stance as a liberal-conservative party. He says that AKP transformed the political Islam in Turkey into conservative liberalism<sup>53</sup>. Secular business elites and liberals in Turkey applauded AKP and saw it as the vanguard party which democratizes Turkey. AKP also adopted the secular principles of the Turkish constitution when it was established and this way it was possible for it to acknowledge votes and support from different segments of the society<sup>54</sup>.

In foreign policy AKP's new economic and democratic agenda let it have a quite attention and a busy schedule. The AKP not just turned into the West like the center politics always has done in Turkey, it also increased its relations

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51 Şükrü KÜÇÜKŞAHİN, "Erdoğan hangi gömleği giyecek?," accessed July 6, 2019, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/erdogan-hangi-gomlegi-giyecek-175953>.

52 De Leon, Desai, and Tuğal, *Building Blocs*, 97.

53 Tuğal, *The Fall of the Turkish Model*, 4.

54 Tanıl Bora, *Cereyanlar: Türkiye'de Siyasi İdeolojiler* (İletişim Yayınları, 2016), 477–78.

with neighbor countries and the Middle East. One can say that the conservative democratic agenda of AKP also used for its foreign policy steps. AKP increased the efficiency of globalism, unlike the Kemalists before it<sup>55</sup>.

In the economic area, AKP used the conditions on the global economy wisely. In the first decade of its tenure in Turkish politics, AKP increased GDP in a very visible manner. Combining its foreign policy with economic policy AKP increased GDP by nearly 8 percent in the first decade<sup>56</sup>. The economic success of AKP is really important for its hegemony over the decades. Many observers say that AKP was a product of the entrepreneur spirit. In terms of economic policies, AKP's entrepreneur spirit comes from old allies in the Anatolia. Anatolian merchants led the Erbakan's Milli Gorus Parties establishment. During the early 2000s, these middle businesses became giant economic powers and they gave support to AKP. On the other hand, the secularists in Turkey did not take a stance against AKP publicly. AKP used the world economic situation very smart and make its economic allies strong within the country. Besides the giant economic powers, AKP also supported Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). The SME became the power behind the Turkish economy in the first decade of AKP's tenure. On the one hand, the governments supported all sorts of economic activity done by SMEs. On the other hand, there has been a specific sector which could be seen as the pioneer of the AKP governments: The construction sector. The construction sector has been the engine behind AKP's hegemony's economic stance.

### 3.5.1 *The AKP and Construction Sector: Capital and Cheap Houses*

The construction business during the AKP era has two meanings for AKPs hegemony: First off, increasing its ally's capital accumulation. Secondly supplying cheap houses for its main supporters.

The AKP used construction business and real estate as its growth engines and used the construction boom as its strategic choice. The growth of the real estate sector is seen in the world stage but in the case of Turkey, many scholars insisted that AKP used this sector as the result of its non-economic factors for

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55 Tugal, *The Fall of the Turkish Model*, 5.

56 Tugal, 6.

AKP's hegemony over Turkish society. Its allies in the business which needs a growing economy in everyday used the construction business as away. Two ways that AKP used the construction sector: One way is using state agency TOKİ (Toplu Konut İdaresi or Housing Development Administration) and the second way is supporting certain contractors thorough state-sponsored credits. Contractors are also supported by supplying them state-owned lands for creating more buildings. Throughout the years the contractors became real estate giants. They entered different sectors and increased their effect within the party and also in the government and country. Especially the most important allies of the AKP became notable media bosses. AKP's growing authoritarian tendencies in the last decade are related to its oppression towards the press. Together with oppression to the opposition news channels, AKP also supported by these newly-established news channels by its allies. So, the meaning of real estate and construction business is far beyond its economic effects in Turkey.

TOKİ is the most used agency by the AKP for its strategy in the construction sector. It was established in 1984 for supplying credits for small contractors and citizens who want to have a house. But during the AKP era, with a series of changes in the law, TOKİ became more effective and powerful. AKP also permitted its ministers that did not have before, for speeding up the constructions all across the country. AKP also gave authority to municipalities (most of them are owned by the AKP) to increase construction processes easily in the local<sup>57</sup>. The AKP's strategic choice was successful. Together with the growth in the world economy between 2002-2008 AKP successfully increased the capital accumulation of business owners who have loyalty to the party.

As Sinan Gulhan puts out that AKP created a group of contractors who are loyal to its governments, who affect the urban cities more than before. AKP's contractors have world records in this stance<sup>58</sup>. Gülhan also says that

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57 Sevinç Doğan, "Mahalledeki AKP," *Parti İşleyişi, Taban Mobilizasyon ve Siyasal Yabancılaşma*. İstanbul, 2016, 178.

58 Sinan T. Gülhan, "Devlet Müteahhitlerinden Gayrimenkul Geliştiricilerine. Türkiye'de Kentsel Rant ve Bir Meta Olarak Konut Üreticiliği. Konuta Hücum," *Birikim Sosyalist Kültür Dergisi* 23, no. 8 (2011): 30.

these groups of contractors are different from other sectors. There are millions of dollars at stake, but these big giant firms do not have sufficient professionals at their companies<sup>59</sup>.

Melih Yeşilbağ links the AKP's choice on the construction business as an engine for economic growth with the neoliberal financialization, consumption, commodification of urban space and capital accumulation through urbanization<sup>60</sup>. The neoliberalization in Turkey started the post-1980 period and AKP is seen as the last political party who continue to implement neoliberal economic and social policies. However, multiple factors make the construction sector as AKP's number one economic choice.

After the 2001 economic crisis, governments needed to answer some urgent needs. The construction sector has multiple dimensions: It has effects on some subsectors (like iron and steel). After a building constructed and people buy a house, they also continue to buy new things (furniture, automobile, etc.). A production in real estate gives growth to other sectors too. In addition to this, the sector and businesses need workers. So, the real estate also creates more jobs and decrease unemployment. Reducing the unemployment and supplying house for everyone are the two important factors for AKP's hegemony over its constituents<sup>61</sup>.

The increasing effect of Islamism in Turkey started when Islamists went to the suburbs of the big cities, like Sultanbeyli in Istanbul. AKP, like Refah Partisi in the 1990s, has been the choice of people who lives in the periphery of the big cities. Supplying easy and cheap houses for those people who live in the periphery is an important factor for keeping these people loyal to the party for years. On the one hand, for years people have bought houses easily. On the other hand, the same people became a sort of consumption addict. The credits that they loaned from banks increased during these years. And for maintain-

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59 Gülhan, 30.

60 Melih YEŞİLBAĞ, "Hegemonyanın Harci: Akp Döneminde İnşaatı Dayalı Birikim Rejimi," *Ankara Üniversitesi SBF Dergisi* 71, no. 2 (2016): 613.

61 YEŞİLBAĞ, 615.

ing this system stability became more and more important for citizens, government contractors and allies, SMEs, big business owners and, of course, the party itself.

In their book De Leon et al. say that parties can bring different sets of blocks within a society even if these blocs do not come together with their own. This is the outcome that integral parties do when they succeed in political articulation<sup>62</sup>.

In this thesis, What I am looking for the relation between political party and political articulation with respect to the case of AKP. In terms of political articulation, the activities of political party are crucial since the party is the backbone of the policies. De Leon et al. say that parties use different set of tactics for political articulation. These tactics and means are open to the political parties. According to De Leon et al. both in 'democratic' and 'non-democratic' societies political parties have access to the 'system of nominations', 'appointments', and finally 'the resources of state power'<sup>63</sup>. In a nutshell, there might be other social institutions like political parties who attempted to the political articulation. However, political parties are the ones which has opportunities in different kind of societies. In addition to this, not all political parties are successful with their attempts to the political articulation (or bringing the different blocs of the society together long time). There are failed articulations, too. For example, the case of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood pictured as a failed articulation<sup>64</sup>. The Muslim Brotherhood had the chance of the bringing different blocs together, but they could not succeed in this attempt. To understand the differences of the failed and successful articulation attempts, there should be a different angle to look at the process of the inner mechanism of the political powers (political parties in this case) to understand the details of the process of the political articulation.

In the case of the Turkish AKP, the attempts to the political articulation started with its establishment. The AKP rejected its Islamist background and accepted conservative democracy as an ideology to appeal to more people rather than just Islamists who supported Milli Gorus for years. Together with

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62 De Leon, Desai, and Tuğal, *Building Blocs*, 3.

63 De Leon, Desai, and Tuğal, 4.

64 De Leon, Desai, and Tuğal, 111.

doing this, AKP also created an economic environment that allows certain businesses to become successful if they loyal to the government. And the effect of the economy also led AKP to have control over its constituents.

What I am arguing in this thesis is that AKP maintained these policies with its organization. As pointed out in Sevinç Doğan's book, real estate is one of the chosen sectors of AKP members<sup>65</sup>. Since the party works take too much time, those who have their own business are likely to be successful in the party and the businesses that party members are doing is mostly construction business. In this sense Doğan explains the importance of the real estate with respect to its effect on the party. She says that there should be some 'capitals' for being effective within the party or being promoted in the party cadres. One of these capitals is the 'economic capital'. Those who would like to be promoted in the local administration than they should have enough economic power and time for this<sup>66</sup>. Real estate or construction sector are some of the easiest way to make money. Especially, as explained above, since the government has a tremendous effect on this sector.

But beyond this relation, AKP maintained this hegemony in a structured fashion. The party also maintained advertisement of the services that they have done. These services are mostly infrastructural investments. And most importantly for creating and bringing different sets of blocs within the society the 'structured creativity of parties' is a necessity.

In line with De Leon et all. and Sevinç Doğan it can be said that the party is the center of complex relation between politics, economics and society. On the one hand, the party uses state apparatuses for creating consensus between different social groups. Economically also party creates a mechanism through certain sectors for supporting its ideologic stance. The party creates economic capital for certain business groups and its party officials. On the other hand, through investments and social distributive mechanisms party holds creates new supporters from the citizens. In addition to this holds this mechanism for a long time. Beyond any doubt the power of being government for a long time gives certain capabilities to the AKP cadres. However, as I pointed out before

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65 Doğan, "Mahelledeki AKP," 103.

66 Doğan, 104.

there are different governments that failed on the political articulation. Eventually, the AKP managed to use certain historical conditions for implementing its plan in every stage. This shows the significance of the structured creativity of political parties on the establishing political articulation

To conclude, the story of Turkish Islamists has evolved from an ideology to a stable, institutionalized political party. From its early years in the 1970s, it has similarities with its Egyptian counterpart. In the 1990s, the effect of the Iranian Revolution and the rise of identity movements led Islamists to be effective in Turkish politics. After a decade of struggle with the Turkish secular state, the Islamist survived to garner power under the AKP. The most distinguished aspect of the AKP is its organizational capacity, which allowed the party to create its own constituents. In the next chapter, we will see the cornerstones of the AKP's organizational structure, which I call its *party machine*.



## The Professional Political Party: AKP Machine' and Its Structure

For over 16 years now AKP governments have been running the country. The party was established in 2001, and in the first day, its leader Recep Tayyip Erdogan said 'From now on nothing will be the same in Turkey'<sup>1</sup>. One part of the sentence is true: Turkish politics has lived through incredible moments from the founding of the AKP. EU-Turkey relations were at their peak during the early 2000s. The Turkish parliament elected a president who has an Islamic background, and for the first time in its history, military officials were on trial because of military coup accusations. Moreover, the Turkish state started to talk with the Kurdish militia PKK for a peace settlement after more than 30 years of conflict. A referendum was held, and the Turkish judicial system was handed to the civilian government and its allies. In June 2013, the biggest civilian protest occurred with the Gezi Park demonstrations. A war between the AKP and Fetullahist organization (another Islamist movement) erupted for the first time in Turkish history. In 2016, Turkey faced a military coup attempt in prime time on television and the government managed to thwart this attempt. Turkish people voted on another referendum to elect a president affiliated with a political party. These are only some of the incredible

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1 "Erdogan: Hiç bir şey eskisi gibi olmayacak," accessed May 18, 2019, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/erdogan-hic-bir-sey-eskisi-gibi-olmayacak-10050>.

events that have occurred during the AKP's tenure. There has been one leader with a group of people running the country during these tumultuous years. If a child was born in 2002 when the AKP entered government, now she/he can go to university.

In traditional Turkish politics, there would be different political parties and leaders who would become ministers, prime ministers and presidents. For example, during the 1970s and 1990s, Turkish politics had the same leaders and the same political parties but had different cadres and coalitions to run the country. In today's Turkey, during the AKP years, it is not only impossible to gain power if you are not part of AKP's system, it is also very difficult to become a player in the game. From 2002 to today, there have been 11 elections and three referendums and the AKP has won all of them. In 2009 and in June 2015, the AKP had the worst election results in its history (they lost the single party government majority in June 2015), yet they also got over 40% of the total vote in both elections. Turkey had faced one party rule before: During the Democratic Party era from 1950 to 1960 and during the 1980s. However, both one party governments eventually lost power. There was a military coup in 1960, and in 1991, the Anavatan Partisi (ANAP) lost the majority in parliament. So, the question here is how exactly does the AKP maintain its power, especially during turbulent years?

There are different arguments for explaining the AKP's success. I do not focus on the party's economic policies, the charismatic leader, the social policies of the party and other policy oriented reasons. In this thesis, I will analyze the AKP's party structure. During the last 17 years, the rhetoric, policies and discourses of the party have changed, but the structure of the party has not. How is it possible that a political party has totally different policies and discourses after its establishment with the same cadres, but manages to maintain, even increase its support from the public?

All political parties have grassroots organizations, but the AKP's organization is much more professional than its counterparts. The professionalism of the party has been one of the reasons for the AKP's power over the years. The AKP has carefully defined the rules and principles, and integrated the system in favor of its leaders, allowing them to win successive elections and rule the country. In this sense Sevinç Doğan argues that AKP's party organization has

a dynamic relation with the society<sup>2</sup> and through this dynamic relation with the different segments of the society AKP used the system to its favor being dominant in the politics. In addition to this, she thinks those who have economic and social relations in the street level have defined the party's success<sup>3</sup>.

Traditional political parties usually establish an organization to gather support from citizens that share their ideology. The AKP goes beyond this, by managing to attract support from other parties in the system. On the one hand, party officials have an option to change the party's discourse based on the desires of the organization. On the other hand, the party operates more like a machine that never sleeps and always works. In opposition to its counterparts and its predecessors, the AKP's grassroots organization evolved into a Weberian bureaucracy.

There are different aspects of the Weberian type of bureaucracy. In his book *Economy and Society*, Weber encapsulates the modern bureaucracy. He sees the bureaucracy as the pioneer of the efficiency of the modern state management. Besides Weber emphasizes that the efficient bureaucratic organization can be seen in political parties and economic organizations too. My findings from the fieldwork show that AKP's grassroot organization has characteristics which demonstrate Weberian type of efficient bureaucracy<sup>4</sup>.

In this chapter, I will explain the cornerstones of AKP's party organization. First off, all the concept of meeting within the party will be explained. Secondly, party's open door policy against citizens will be analyzed. Third, party discipline will be explained. The AKP's most busy times, Ramadan and pre-election times, will also be explained. Lastly, the party's candidate selection method will be analyzed. The points in these chapters are filtered from my field research mostly based on in-depth interviews.

In this chapter, the AKP's organizations basic working style and characteristics will be explained. From the analysis of the interviews and the party documents, important aspects of the party works, the party's expectations from its members, members & volunteers' expectations from the party and

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2 Akdoğan, *Muhafazakar demokrasi*, 258.

3 Akdoğan, 257.

4 Max Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, vol. 1 (Univ of California Press, 1978), 956.

party's unwritten rule will be explained. This chapter analyzes the inner operational process of the AKP and questions its relation with AKP's creating of the political articulation.

#### § 4.1 Strict Organization of Time

AKP pays attention to internal meetings. These meetings are the actual places that politics is created. All members give their opinions about current issues in these meetings. The internal meetings meant to keep the organization up to date and mobilized<sup>5</sup>. The party takes it very seriously for the attendance of members. The party keeps attendance sheets for every meeting. Members can designate a deputy in advance if they could not attend a meeting, but it is not welcomed by the party. In my opinion, this meeting structure is one of the elements of the AKP's professional works. As it is seen in the interviews, the party asks questions to those who did not take the party works seriously. This means that the party does not have a room for everyone. Hard-working and paying attention to party work is a priority for being within the party network.

In my interviews, I was told that attending scheduled meetings is the most important duty of party members. After conducting interviews with people from Milli Gorus and from the AKP, I learned that attending meetings was an important aspect of party membership, especially for Milli Gorus political parties such as Refah Partisi. It appears that the AKP inherited this emphasis on the importance of scheduled meetings.

For example, Hasan was a member of the founding committee of the AKP, and later became the party's first term MP. He was on the side of the Yenilikciler during the 1990s in favor of *changing the party's image*. Before joining the AKP, Hasan was a provincial chairman in the Refah Partisi. He graduated from an İmam Hatip School and studied engineering in one of the top schools in Turkey. While explaining the Refah Partisi's system he said, "Every week members who are in provincial administration have to go to the neighbors that they are responsible for, and those who are in city administration

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5 Doğan, "Mahalledeki AKP," 72.

have to go to the province that they are responsible for. They have to attend the meetings.”

Mustafa is still a member of Saadet Partisi, which is the current political party of Milli Gorus. He gave me a detailed explanation of the party’s meetings. “All parties have different working styles. Every organization does the same thing yet the AKP is different from us. They can’t work like us. They can’t make scheduled meetings in every street in every week. Yesterday, I had a 6 hour meeting. Every day I work day and night yet what we get is the 0.06. The reason that the AKP and its members get a lot of attention is the interests. If the interests were gone, they will not hold together.”

Mustafa also said that every month they have meetings. If the meeting is set by the provincial head mayor of that province, party members need to attend these meetings. If a district head sets the meeting the street organization must join. Youth and women’s organization heads also attend the meetings at all levels. Participation is mandatory. “Erbakan always said that if the government is given by the high jump then Milli Gorus members would be the best high jumpers”.

Every interviewee answered the questions from their stance. Mustafa, in this case, stressed the importance of the meetings but he also gives another important clue about the issue: The meaning of making meetings for political parties. He says Saadet Partisi also making meetings relentlessly, but they cannot get the success in the election. Certainly, there are other political parties (considering that there are almost 100 political parties in Turkey) that make strict meeting organizations but do not have electoral success. The question is how can we relate the internal discipline of a party to its electoral success?

If we read the Saadet Partisi case, one can say that SP does not have a huge electoral success, but they managed to keep loyal supporters after the 2002 electoral defeat. Now, with the help of the political system in which every single vote is important, SP with its loyal followers became effective in politics. This means that a political party with a disciplined organization could keep its effects for the years even if that party is out of parliament. In the case of AKP, it is important to stress that the inner discipline is not the only character of the AKP. However, this discipline keeps the party alive at any time. With the

help of parties' government-linked patronage networks, it can be said that the party always has its human power when necessary<sup>6</sup>

Of course, we know that the AKP makes meetings and organizes its inner structure. What we have to understand from Mustafa's point of view is that Saadet Partisi is still using an effective party mechanism. The effectiveness of the inner mechanism (meetings, organization of time etc.) is not the only reason of an electoral victory. In other words, AKP has not won all the elections just because of it has a disciplined party. Yet, the discipline in the inner party structure could led a political party's continuous existence in the political arena. The case of SP shows this. Even there is a rival like AKP, the SP managed to be in the arena. A comparison between SP and AKP's organizational works show the importance of the organizational discipline in the political parties.

İsmail had worked for the AKP's Istanbul Youth Organization for two and a half years. He worked for a commission member. He did not attend the administration meetings, but he attended the commission meetings<sup>7</sup>.

While he was a member of the party, he was asked to be appointed to a higher position. But he refused, because 'the party works takes too much of his time'. When he worked for the party, he attended weekly and monthly meetings. He said, "in the youth organization, if you are a commission member, they do not force you to attend the meetings, but it is a good thing for you to attend. They expect to see you there."

An interesting observation came from Leyla. As a committee member, she worked for one of the biggest administrative branches of the AKP. She comes from a secularist background and had her own PR agency at one time. She also worked for several non-governmental organizations, and in this way, she became familiar with politics. After a failed adventure as an MP candidate, the party did not want to lose her, so they proposed a seat at the party organization. She said, "those were times that the party still needed the liberals and I was one of them." I asked her about how much time she spent for the party during her tenure at the AKP. She replied that, "deputies spend almost all of their daytime at the headquarters. They have their own secretaries and their

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6 Doğan, 103.

7 When I interviewed İsmail, he did not allow me to record his voice, nor did he allow me to write his full name in my notebook. We just talked and I took notes about the conversation.

own offices. The administrative members apart from the duties attend the meetings.” In accordance with her background, she was part of the advertising and media team, which has weekly meetings. “But the most important meetings,” she said “are the administrative body meetings. The meeting is scheduled for every two weeks and takes all afternoon sometimes until midnight.”

Every topic is discussed in these meetings and the chairman listens to all ideas. In line with Leyla’s remarks, Ayşe, who is still working for the AKP, gave me similar insights about the importance of meetings. Her remarks revealed that attendance is not just the responsibility of higher ranking officials, but also for those who are in lower positions. Ayşe said that, “all commissions have their own agenda and they have to follow the agenda.” For example, the Istanbul organization created some social committees. Those committees are responsible for social works like the health commission, the handicapped peoples commission and sports commission. When a commission like this is created, it exists at the city, provincial and street levels. All levels have to make weekly meetings.

The party’s inner circles are being mobilized and up to date with the help of the disciplined work of the organization. The members are expected to be in the meetings, and they are also expected to contribute the party works. Through making this members and volunteers are always ready for any kind of activity, an election for example, or keeping close relation with the constituents. Another important outcome of this organizational characteristics is that the party always keeps its members within the ideological discussions. By attending these meetings, members and volunteers have chance to affect the decision-making process of the party and the government. This is an important motive for the political party activists generally.

However, again it should be noted that this is not the only reason for the AKP’s long tenure in Turkish politics or its hegemony. There are multiple reasons for that. First of all, without having a clear policy agenda, the party volunteers disciplined works would not be meaningful. As discussed, chapters before, the AKP implemented certain policies for generating its hegemony. It also has a certain ideology supplementing its policies and actions. The organizational works or discipline only meaningful when other factors also in use effectively. In other words, ideology, policies, conjuncture and ability to use all

these are necessary not just for creating a hegemony but even for recurring electoral success. The party work could be considered as subsidiary for these factors. All of them should be discussed and considered altogether for understanding the AKP's long government years. The effect of the party on these different factors also should be analyzed and researched in the future with respect to their effects on each other.

#### § 4.2 Keeping the Party Open: The Staff at the Headquarters

The party's operation spaces are significant for Milli Gorus parties. Since the political parties of this movement have been periodically closed and banned from politics by the Constitutional Court, I wondered about the party buildings. I asked this question to the interviewees and received interesting answers. Throughout the years, a movement can create their own defense mechanisms. During the Refah Partisi's existence, the party did not have too much money to spare, according to Ramazan, so most of the spending for the buildings came from the members. Ramazan participated in Milli Gorus politics during the 1991 coalition between Refah and MHP. At that time, he was working for MHP. He was responsible for the party's organization for a city in the eastern part of Turkey. After Refah Partisi was banned from politics, he did not involve himself in political activity. He said, "we did not have money. I brought the tables, somebody else brought the chairs and we had a building to operate." "After the closure," he said, "I took my own table back home." About the buildings, Hasan said, "for the Milli Gorus parties, since we had an experience about MSP and MNP closures during the 70s and 80s, we did not buy the buildings. All the city organizations and other organizations have rented buildings. Yet the renter also is a party member or part of the movement. No payment was given." He added with a smile: "the saying that only the billboard is changing when our parties are closed, it is true." He said that this applies for the AKP's buildings as well.

Recently Saadet Partisi has this dramatic event about its headquarters in Ankara. Necmettin Erbakan's family have been trying to create a new political agenda apart from Saadet Partisi. Erbakan's son and his followers left the party to open Yeniden Refah Partisi. But the headquarters of Saadet Partisi is his

property. As we read in the news that the party did not pay its rent, so they had to leave the building after this disagreement<sup>8</sup>.

So after almost 50 years, Islamist parties still have a building problem. Before, the party closures make it important to know where these parties operate. Now, the split within the party shows it. It also reveals a unique characteristic of Turkish politics. The involvement of family into politics. It might be argumentative whether labeling this issue as nepotism or not, but it is seen that Erbakan's political party used a building which is owned by his family (At least this is true for HQ. We do not know about local buildings). In the case of AKP, it is understandable that the AKP also rents buildings for its operations since the AKP was almost closed by Constitutional Court in 2008. From the building issue, it can be said that political Islam sees its institutionalization on its ideology rather than its institutions. Renting buildings for party operations show that these parties have belongings to the movement rather than the party itself.

Apart from the owner of the buildings, the AKP gives significant importance to the party's buildings. They are the spaces for the party to communicate with the public. When I first went to the party's Istanbul building, I felt that it was a mixture of a private hospital and a state office. When you are in the waiting lounge, you can hear the phone ringing and quiet chatting. Without asking, tea is served with AKP branded sugar. The place has good lighting, so you can enjoy the party's posters and the leader's massive photos, while you sip traditional Turkish tea.

In order to communicate to the public, the party opens access to its offices for all. All the doors were open. I went there after the coup attempt on July 16, 2016, and there was a police escort at the gate. They asked for my name, and after confirmation they let me in, because I had a scheduled meeting with a party official.

An important party practice is to keep its offices open to the public, even on weekends. Leyla said that all members of the administrative committee had

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8 "Saadet Partisi Genel Merkezi tahliye ediliyor," accessed May 18, 2019, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/saadet-partisi-genel-merkezi-tahliye-ediliyor-41179462>.

a watch duty. Every day, one official is responsible for greeting people and asking about their demands from the party. Whether you are part of the city administration or provincial administration, there should be one person in the party whose duty it is to communicate with visitors to the party offices. Another responsibility requires calling the provincials to check if they are in the building. Both Leyla and Levent confirmed to me that this practice is a very important task for the party's day to day work. Even Leyla said, "you have to do this. You cannot cut your watch duty. If you are about to die, maybe you can change your day with somebody. But at the end, you will make this."

Keeping party buildings open, even in weekends, and giving top party officials a duty to listen to citizens demands is a key to understand the relation between the AKP and its constituents. The party welcomes its citizens all the time. Party members are mobilized not just for propaganda, not just during election times, but also during regular times. Party makes meetings with people in regular times too. However, the party also accepts citizens to its operation centers. The mutual relations between parties and citizens created with these methods and practices. In other words, there are three operations that AKP uses that have the same conclusions: Going to people, either for propaganda or just for presence, and welcoming citizens to the party centers. In Chapter 5, the outcomes of these meetings will be analyzed but the years of practice of the party should be seen. Over 15 years the AKP welcomed citizens to its centers just for listening to them. This a way for creating a trust between the party and citizens<sup>9</sup>.

By doing this, the party increases its chances of being an integral party. It does not just work like a political organization that aims for the votes of people for political power. It works like an organization that has constant touch with the people, with the aim of making them into supporters. This has been important especially at a time when other types of political participation (such as unions) have dwindled<sup>10</sup>.

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9 Doğan, "Mahalledeki AKP," 73.

10 Tugal, *The Fall of the Turkish Model*, 48.

### § 4.3 Party Discipline: Reporting from the Bottom Up

Intra-party discipline is often a contentious issue for political parties. If a party has a strict disciplinary mechanism, then party members or MPs would not be flexible to do or say as they please. Yet on the other hand, if the disciplinary mechanism is not strict enough, then collective action becomes difficult. For AKP, I learned that discipline is the foremost principle governing the party. In this section, I will look at the organization's disciplinary mechanism and its possible effects.

Reporting is the main duty of party officials. As described in the introduction of this chapter, the AKP's organization is established from the street level, so that reports come from this level. The provincial leaders collect these reports and hand them to the chairman of the city organization. The chairman then, reports to the general headquarters, which is in Ankara. All the discussions in meetings, attendance forms, achievements, activities, demands and possible policy analysis are handed over to the headquarters. Reporting at all levels is the basis of this system.

Moreover, everyone must report to her or his manager or supervisor. The hierarchy is strictly important for the party. "They want a system that works," said Levent. Leyla adds, "in the AK Parti, it is impossible to cut out hierarchy. It is one of the most important things in the party".

Reporting is not new for the AKP. Refah and other Milli Gorus parties also used a strict reporting mechanism. Hasan clearly emphasized this point: "If your results are good, then the headquarters give you reward. If they are not, then they take measures. For Refah Partisi, Milli Gamete subscriptions, new members and meeting numbers were crucial. They give you a target and you have to beat the target." According to Hassan, if there is any "supervision on the activities of party members" then it is meaningless. He also said, "modern corporate management works like this." He mentioned that the targets are checked by the top officials every month.

Ismail echoed a similar situation for the youth organization: "there are reporting systems from bottom to up and the secretariat prepares the reports. The city administration gives feedback to the youth organization, and yearly performance reports are distributed to party officials." Ramazan repeated

what Hasan said about the daily, weekly and monthly reports being very important for the Refah Partisi. As I understand from Refah Partisi and Saadet Partisi officials, increasing subscriptions to Milli Gazete was a top priority for these parties. Hasan said, that “Milli Gazete was very important, because we get all the information and topics that are crucial from Milli Gazete.”

Leyla gave me detailed information about how reporting is conducted from bottom to top. She said, “when an official had a duty watch, he or she needs to put all the things done in there in a report at the end of the day. In that daily report, if you solved a problem, then you need to write it down.” When I asked her, “did you also write about the things that were not done?” She replied, “yes, you have to write everything. You have to write every demand, so that officials can look at it.”

But the reporting is not the only part of the daily office routine. If a party official had duty watch, then this official should check the provincials, and if they are not at their seats, or if the phones are not ringing, then it is reported to the top officials at the city level.

In addition to the activity report, the disciplinary mechanism is also used during election campaigns. There are Election Coordination Centers for each electoral district. This committee is responsible for all the canvassing operations for AKP candidates. All electoral activities are prepared from this center, which works 24/7 during election time. According to Levent, “each day, MP candidates have different programs. The party makes the program and the candidates, together with 2 party officials, will follow the program every day. During these events, party officials will call these MPs and ask them ‘where are you now?’ Because the program is very specific, and they have to follow it minute by minute.” This means that the party makes the program and puts party officials near MP candidates for supervision. In addition, MP candidates are randomly checked to see if they are doing their jobs. Levent added, “of course these are included the reports.”

When I asked Leyla about what would happen if she did not follow the program during the pre-election period, she said, “they will survive for the day, but later you would not want to be face to face with officials for this.”

The hierarchy, reporting system and the disciplinary mechanism are key factors for the system’s success. At some points, the party would spend too

much money, and they have to ensure that they effectively use their man power. If the organization is not working as it should, the party has to know this. The history of the AKP demonstrates that its organizational system works, as seen by its electoral success.

The two factors also show us that the AKP's operation style fits the Weberian type of bureaucracy. Weber highlights the importance of hierarchy. He says if the 'bureaucratic type is fully developed then all levels would have monocratic leaders'<sup>11</sup>. This means that in every level, all worker or responsible (in our case party officials) would find a person in charge. He also adds that large political parties, economic organizations are using this system in addition to the modern's states for maximizing their efficiency<sup>12</sup>.

In addition to hierarchy, there are always supervisor or party executives who defines the tasks. As discussed above there are Election Coordination Centers before elections to give duties to the members. Matter of fact it became unimportant whoever deliver these tasks. The party wants the tasks to be completed. Rather than personal importance of individuals the importance is given to the task compilation.

#### § 4.4 The Organization's Busy Periods: Ramadan and Pre-election

Two of the interviewees stressed that the party never sleeps during election season. They also stressed that another busy time for the party is Ramadan.

The party's daily activities with people are home visits, patient visits, organizing breakfasts after morning prayers, to name a few such duties. During pre-election season and Ramadan, the party becomes especially active with more events and visitors.

According to Ismail, the party expects everyone on the field during election time. According to both Ismail and Leyla, elections require two and half months. Once the candidates are finalized, MP candidates and party members

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11 Max Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, vol. 1 (Univ of California Press, 1978), 957.

12 Weber, 1:957.

start to work on the field. Ismail mentioned that officials visit homes with candidates, and that the last month specifically is important for the party. Both during elections and Ramadan, the party visits the communities and homes that are economically disadvantaged.

Leyla provided a deeper explanation of the election time. She mentioned that just a day after her candidacy was designated, she started to visit homes with the organization. “I lost 4 kilos during election time,” adding that “the program starts from 8 am with a breakfast meeting and ends at midnight.” She goes on to say: “It was like Marshall law. There is a chairman at the Election Coordination Committee, and he decides all the programs like visiting homes, hospitals or shelters. The street organization decides on which homes the candidate should visit. You have to be there and smile. I felt like I was a commodity for them, and they were selling me. What you are saying is not important. It is important to be present. 7 days. No break. One day I said enough is enough. Give me a day off. They accepted, but after that I started again.”

According to her, another busy time is Ramadan. She said that, “every day, Iftar and Sahur members have to visit a home or organize an event.” She was a member of the city administration committee, and every committee member is responsible for a provincial in the city. During Ramadan and other ordinary days, members have to attend meetings in that province. “Some of the events are made by the city administration. It was impossible to cut these events. I was surprised at how a party does Ramadan with this intensity.”

From these answers I identify two tasks for party members: Sustaining inner party mechanism through scheduled meetings and establishing a continuing relationship with constituents and voter through organized meetings. The former enables the party to regularly flow information to all party levels and manage the organization. The latter makes it possible to the party organization always has a contact with voters. The meetings within the party makes party to behave like a corporation. They have executives who designates roles and responsibilities. The members and volunteers can be seen as the workers of this corporation<sup>13</sup>. They produce a continuing relation with individuals. The

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13 I used bureaucracy and Corporation with same purposes keeping in the mind their differences.

interesting part is that this contact with individuals never stops. The organization is making public meetings in regular times, iftar and sahur programs during Ramadan and face to face canvassing during pre-election times. The intensity of this relation is increased during Ramadan and pre-election times. At this point we need to remember that the party is making this all across the country. It can be seen in AKP's website that party has active officials in all cities<sup>14</sup>. Recently the party also designated officials for several countries<sup>15</sup>. The activities of the party show us the party is acting like a *machine*. It increases its intensity of work in different times, but it never stops.

This party machine has an aim. It used every opportunity to get close with citizens. The continuous meetings show this. In addition to this party also aims to expand and attract citizens to itself. Any new individual or group is welcomed at the party and its members use different venues for expanding. It is understandable that a political party works hard during an election time. However, work without elections need an explanation as well as offices in different countries. The aim is always expanding to other citizens who do not have a loyalty to the party. Rather than aiming votes in election times, party aims to create loyal constituents for itself. And expanding its constituents is the most important task for the party members and volunteers. The works during Ramadan and other times not just show that the party never stop its work, but also it is an indicator of the AKP's integral party nature. Integral parties, as discusses in previous chapters, create their own constituents by using different blocs within the society. In this sense the AKP organizations structured works and agenda show that the party has all sign of being integral party.

#### § 4.5 Candidate Selection and Party Rules

Candidate selection is a fragile topic in the Turkish political system. It has been said that hypocrisy, nepotism and favoritism are more widespread than merit.

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14 "AKPARTİ," accessed May 18, 2019, <https://www.akparti.org.tr/>.

15 "AK Parti'den 7 Ülkede Temsilcilik," accessed May 18, 2019, <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/politika/ak-partiden-7-ulkede-temsilcilik/1017851>.

In politics, having allies in the bureaucracy means having power in Turkish politics. In a similar vein, candidate selection in political parties tend to be power games. Like all political parties, the AKP has several different factions, which have an ambition to be more effective within the party. For example, before the AKP, its founders represented the young generation and called themselves the reformers of the Fazilet Partisi, fighting against the party's traditionalists. The AKP also has different factions and during the candidate selection period, these factions become more visible. Moreover, the AKP is likely to win the elections, since it has state power and a track record of successful previous elections. Because of this, choosing candidates for the party is an important process, and for the candidates, it means a lot to be chosen.

Much like all the other features and processes previously described, the AKP inherited the candidate selection process from the old Milli Gorus parties. Not just in the candidate selection but generally it could be said that the AKP professionalized the system that it inherited from its predecessors. The professionalization in here came from the party leader's affection to the modern corporate management. As Küçük and Özselçuk argued that the AKP wishes to run the country like company (Erdoğan would be its CEO). This mentality is easily seen in the party management too. Targets, performance metrics and reports are the outcomes of this perception<sup>16</sup>.

Based upon my observations and the interviews I can define Milli Görüş parties as small enterprise in the politics. Yet, in this analogy the AKP would be a giant company. Interestingly the economic power behind Milli Görüş was small merchants in the Anatolia. AKP had support of the giant corporations. Lastly the magnitude of the voters might be used as a comparison point. RP in 1990s had 21% of votes (which was its highest votes) but the AKP mostly associated with 50%. So, the quality of the works done by both sides also related with these comparison points.

I specifically asked interviewees about the candidate selection system of the AKP and Milli Gorus parties. All interviewees answered this question by

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16 Bülent Küçük and Ceren Özselçuk, "Mesafeli'Devletten 'Hizmetkâr'Devlete: AKP'nin Kısmi Tanıma Siyaseti," *Toplum ve Bilim* 132 (2015): 177.

stressing the importance of the organization's voice during the candidate selection process. The answers they provided touched upon different angles.

Hasan drew a general picture of the congresses held by the Milli Gorus parties: "The most important thing in the Milli Gorus parties is that there is one candidate and one list. If there would be different candidates for one position and there is a race between them, there would be some resentment and resignations, so this unwanted. There is pre-congress work. In Milli Gorus parties the specific location is determined before the congress. There are three stages of the process. A survey is distributed to the existing organization. Secondly, mayors give their ideas. Third, there are inspectors of Milli Gorus in every city. The AKP does not have this inspector's system. I mean, in every city there is both a provincial head and an inspector for the Milli Gorus parties. The party chairman controls every city through these inspectors. In addition, there is tele-management for the Milli Gorus parties. The party chairman, Erbakan, asked the opinion of the local leaders who are close to the Milli Gorus parties. After the three stages, the candidates are designated. The congresses are claptraps. Before the congress, all the candidates are designated based on this system." Hasan also said that the AKP has pretty much the same system when determining the organization's leaders. He added that that, "the AKP uses the same system, but since the AKP has 50% of constituencies, there are different people within the party who have different party backgrounds. They might not be used to this system, because of their background. There are some fights because of this. Yet, candidates are mostly designated before congresses."

In addition to party leaders, there is another process for determining MP candidates. The AKP has a hiring process, which Leyla explained to me: "First of all, I was working for a non-governmental organization. The party had a positive opinion about our work and I also met MPs from different parties during my non-governmental work. Before the parliamentary election, the AKP reached out to our organization and asked some names for MP candidates. They never promised, but they said to us to make the application to the party. We made these applications and only I was chosen to be candidate."

Before designation, a vice chairman of the party conducts an interview. I was interviewed but they already knew my work at the non-governmental organizations. They did not ask too many questions to me.”

I have to add that Levent mentioned that during interviews, applicants are asked everything.

But according to Leyla, the process has other interesting parts: “In the middle of the night, my phone rang and an official from the party told me that we are making you a candidate for your hometown. I said no, you can’t do that. I am not living there for years. After I said that, I closed the phone and a couple hours later, almost morning, my phone rang again, and they said we changed your location and you will be a candidate for a big city [I could not give her city or the seat number]<sup>17</sup>. Then I accepted. Yet, as I learned later, the chairman Erdogan said to the organization, you will put a woman in every 5 seats. But my seat shifted. I learned that a powerful lobby within the party pushed very hard to make that happen, otherwise the order of the leader was very clear.”

Obviously, as we learned from the press, the leader has an influence on the candidates. He and top officials put aside full day meetings to look at all applicants<sup>18</sup>. Various lobbies within the party have an influence on these candidate applications.

In addition to different strategies of candidate selection, the party has unwritten rules for its members. These rules are valid for all members of the organization from top to bottom, including members of parliaments, mayors and head officials. All political parties have written rules and official bylaws, the including AKP. But the party also has some unwritten rules in line with its disciplinary mechanism. One of the most important unwritten rules is “you can make criticisms about the party within the party, but you cannot disclose your criticisms publicly.” This rule, like other principles valid for Milli Gorus parties, is also successfully implemented by the AKP, as I was told.

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17 Author’s note.

18 “Partilerde ‘aday listesi’ mesaisi,” accessed May 18, 2019, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/partilerde-aday-listesi-mesaisi-6630674>.

Mehmet is a member of Saadet Partisi. He is actively working for the party's eastern cities committee. Since his teens, he has followed the Milli Gorus movement. His family was also active with the movement, and he has a brother, who is now a top official at the party. He said that 'GİK', which is the top official mechanism of the Refah Partisi, Fazilet Partisi and Saadet Partisi, was their 'secret' organization. "Hoca (Necmettin Erbakan) spoke to the press before GİK meetings. He says whatever that is needed. He also spoke to the guests if they were present. After that, the meeting started. The inner agenda points were never discussed in front of strangers. But within these meetings, anybody can say anything. He gave voice to every member and listened to all criticism." He also said that during the time of the Refah Partisi, names like Abdullah Gül and Bülent Arinc, representing the reformist faction within the party, were members of GİK (Genel İdare Kurulu) GİK was the central decision making committee of the RP.

İsmail repeated what Mehmet mentioned, that within the party all criticism was allowed. "There was a culture of self-criticism within the party. Those who had criticism were never intervened." Leyla also provided such details. During her tenure at the party, she became the voice of the liberals. On all topics, she presented ideas that might not be coherent with the party's ideology. According to her, the party leaders would especially want to listen to her in order to gather different perspectives. "I was a dissident. No doubt there were people who were uncomfortable with this. After all, I was a stranger for their culture and hierarchy. For example, there were topics that we discussed at the management board. I always said my own opinion, even if it was contrary to the general opinion of the party's ideology. I was the only one to say such things. Young members would give me their support, but they gave support secretly. They sent me messages for being proactive about some sensitive subjects." When I asked her if it is possible to discuss these matters publicly or share them with the press, she was very clear: "No. This is very important. You cannot talk publicly. You need to say everything within the party. We close the doors, we say everything within the meeting, but if we make a decision in here you have to defend it publicly. You may do everything to affect the decision, nobody stops you, but you have to defend the party no matter. This is an unwritten rule of the party."

Another party rule deals with money. Political parties are paid from the state budget before every election. In addition to this money, parties may collect donations. They use this money for winning elections. The significant feature of the AKP's party structure is that it never pays its members. This rule is not just valid for the AKP, but it is also a rule for other Milli Gorus parties. In addition, party members and officials pay for the party during some occasions.

Hasan said that some of the workers may be paid, but the officials are not: "Everyone makes their own financial plan. Nobody gets paid at the Milli Gorus parties. This is another reason that Milli Gorus is a 'dava' (cause) party. Voluntariness is the key." Ramazan also stressed this principle. He said that when the party gets money from the state, the general headquarters split the money for lower branches. It may be understandable for Refah Partisi, since the party never gets enough resources. Even when the party was in government, its tenure was very short. Interestingly, AKP also never pays for their members. Both Ismail and Leyla stressed this. Leyla mentioned that the party gets donations from its members. She said that everybody pays in accordance with their wealth. "During my candidacy I paid it. I had my own business, but there are richer people. I know a person giving millions of dollars in donations for being the party's last candidate in an important city."

For these two unwritten rules, I gleaned some insights from Levent as well. He said that when the AKP was established, all members had an equal voice. But he added that, "a mayor I knew once told me that the party slightly lost its council structure. Some voices started to be cut."

The party's candidate selection shows the low intra party democracy attitude within the AKP. On the other hand, it creates a different kind of party which defined as 'field' by Sevinç Doğan<sup>19</sup>. The field approach makes it understandable the inner debates, conflicts and political battles within the party. Especially during the candidate selection period this field approach shows itself. Even the leader and party executives decide who will be the candidates, the effect or political power of the candidates would be effective on their decisions. From this point it can be said that even there is a low attitude toward intra

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19 Doğan, "Mahalledeki AKP," 5.

party democracy the party leader give space for the political struggles for increasing the success of the party

On the other hand, the unwritten rules of the party keep these battles within the party. I believe this creates a sacred notion for the members about the party. In addition to this of course these rules keep party's disciplines. However, even if the member and politicians could not speak publicly about their criticisms to the party, they can make their criticisms within the party. This is also supportive for the field notion.

About the candidate selection and party rules, an updated research should be done within the AKP. Especially after the Presidential authoritarian regime change, the leadership effect on the party might increase. I will discuss these possible effects detailed in the Conclusion chapter, but it should be noted that the party is affected by those authoritarian moves, too.

This chapter generally outlined the inner mechanism of the AKP's organization. The basic principles of the party work, the rules and the party's important tasks for the members are analyzed. These characteristics reveal that the AKP has a never ending machine system for its organizational bodies. By using this system, the AKP implemented its policies throughout the years. This chapter showed the operational basics of the AKP. The next chapter will explain the nature of these operations and their outcomes.



## The Machine in Motion: The AKP Working in the Society

This chapter deals with the AKP's operations within the society. How do the leaders of the AKP used their organization to operate within their constituents? How is the relation between party and citizens created? Previous chapter explains the organizational pillars of the party. This chapter, however, explains the effect of the party organization. In light of this, this chapter shows the main components of the party organizations effect on the AKP's hegemony. In other words, since we accept the AKP as an integral/constitutive party, the effect of its organization on this process is filled with this chapter. How did the AKP create its own supporters throughout years?

First off all, the AKP's canvassing strategy will be analyzed. Canvassing is the first important task for political parties or politicians. AKP created a different set of canvassing strategies to appeal to the people. Secondly parties' relations with the citizens and state authorities will be explained based on the demands of the citizens. The demands are mostly related with social security issues. Then the AKP's functionality is explained with respect to its grassroots networks. Lastly party members motivation and networks in the party and government is explained.

## § 5.1 Canvassing: AKP Style

In every election, we can see politicians and candidates meeting with people, smiling and giving them gifts. Canvassing is not a term that applies for any specific political party, movement or country. If there is an election process, democratic or not, then canvassing occurs. Whether you have a chance to be elected or not, canvassing is a necessity for a political party and its candidates. The definition of canvassing as provided by the dictionary is “to try to get political support or votes, especially by visiting all the houses in an area.”<sup>1</sup>

It is expected that party leaders would attend big conventions, meetings and rallies during the election periods. It is likely that party leaders will have support from different segments of society, or they have a charismatic effect which led them to the position. In order to not waste time going through every street and shaking every hand, party officials and volunteers would be there to spread the candidate’s propaganda. For Turkish political culture, which I believe has been affected by the AKP, rallies have taken on a greater meaning. Newspapers especially count the number of rallies that leaders hold during election time. For now, one can say that rallies have become a fetish for the mainstream media and political analysts, especially for writers who are close to the government. Rallies necessitate a lot of money. Since the AKP has been in power all these years, it is the one party that has the greatest amount of money in Turkish politics. During some elections, other parties skip organizing rallies, because they do not have enough money.

If rallies are important for leaders and chairmen to explain the party’s politics to the masses, then canvassing is important for candidates who want to be elected. Canvassing has a different structure. It is not always a platform for politicians to give long speeches. In some events, discussions with citizens can be observed, but mostly, politicians or candidates smile and shake hands with a presentable image.

Before the June 2015 parliamentary elections in Turkey, I was sitting in a coffee shop near my university. A group of people came to the coffee shop wearing suits. They were all men. One of them, who was a candidate I suppose,

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1 “CANVASS | Cambridge İngilizce Sözlüğü’ndeki anlamı,” accessed May 18, 2019, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/tr/s%C3%B6zl%C3%BCk/ingilizce/canvass>.

came to our table and gave us a rose. He smiled, shook our hands, and asked if we were cool. He did this for every table in that coffee shop before leaving. I left that rose on the table, and other people did the same thing. The men did not tell us about which party they belong to. We did not know the name of the candidate. I still do not know his name. It was obvious, perhaps because of the smile on his face, that he was a candidate for a party. This was my experience with canvassing. On social media, politicians across all political parties post photographs with citizens during election season.

In terms of canvassing, there are two crucial differences to observe in the AKP's example: First, they do not implement their canvassing strategy solely during election time. They meet with people, saying "we are here", as part of a daily routine for party members. Traveling house to house is the AKP's motto. Secondly, during election time, the AKP has a canvassing policy that is well structured, and all party members and candidates follow that plan. Election Coordination Centers in every election area are responsible for implementing the plan. As explained in Chapter 4, party members work harder during Ramadan and pre-election periods than in any other time. Here, I will explain the AKP's specific methods for canvassing, which makes them different.

The interviewees answered my questions about canvassing and through their statements, I was able to understand its different aspects for the AKP. Again, it is a fact that the AKP inherited its canvassing style from its predecessors, only making it more complex and structured. Its ability to organize its canvassing is one of the party's primary tools for organizing society.

The party provides training for its officials. As Hasan states:

"For Milli Gorus parties there are organization trainings. These trainings are given at the city headquarters, and provincial officials and city officials join these trainings. In Ankara, city chairmen and organizational chairmen attend them. There are always trainings for party officials. There are trainers in Ankara and from time to time, they are distributed throughout the country. Every trainer is responsible for a specific area. They train city administration, provincial administration and street organization. The trainings include operations, publicity and public relations. After the trainings, attendees receive a certificate. From those responsible for the ballot box all the way to the vice chairmen, all officials receive continuous training."

When I asked him about the content of the training, he said, “first of all the ideology of Milli Gorus is provided. Secondly, communication and body language trainings are given. If a party official goes to a neighborhood, how will he present his party? During the training, officials receive this advice theoretically and they implement them in the field. For example, the head of a street organization would gather people in a kahvehane or in a home where a party official would give his speech. He needs to have an ability to interpret the current issues in politics in accordance with the party’s ideology. Everyone might not have an ability to make a good speech. The one who has that ability makes the speech. The others give support. In old times, we carried videos with us to show people. Now there are no videos. The most important thing for Milli Gorus parties is that these events are made all the time, not just for election time.”

Mustafa said that anybody can be a member of the party, but the organization’s members are selected based on their competence. He also said that they have different trainings for those who are selected to be members. As his remarks: Our Basic Principles, Consolidation of Social Structure, Our Organization Model, Strategy of Our Political Dissidents, are some of these trainings. Every six months, these trainings are provided. Erbakan defined these trainings and they are still used according to the same structure as per Mustafa.

The AKP has a similar style with a more organized version. Leyla and Levent gave insights about the party’s canvassing style. Leyla observed that the pre-election process was important. According to Leyla, the party did not give any trainings until after the candidates were designated. “They just sent me to the streets.” She went on to say:

“During the election period, they are so brutal. The Head of the Election Coordination Center for my district was responsible for our programs. In the first month I believe they were excited about me. I was so inexperienced. The first month, I was dispersed. The second month, I started to make my objections. They were taking me to visit esnaf (tradesmen) in a highly conservative neighborhood. They were so conservative they do not shake hands with women. I said I do not know politics, but how do you make this mistake? I mean is it possible for me to gain votes by visiting with esnaf? I said I want to

work with women. After that point, I started to visit women and they impressed me a lot during this process.”

This shift in her campaign program is a really important point for the purpose of this thesis. There are two interrelated aspects of this shift. First of all, this organization, during a parliamentary election period, can change a program in the middle of the process. If we think about the structure and limits of the organization, then one can say that any change in the program was not so easy. Yet in this example, the organization can take feedback from a candidate and change her program. The second aspect of this shift is that the organization might make all the programs for the candidates based on defined structures or memorized principles. They did not consider how a woman could canvas in a highly conservative neighborhood. The first aspect tells us that the organization is highly capable of learning from a mistake based on feedback from people on the field. The latter implies that the organization has a bias to be alienation to its works.

During the pre-election period, candidates work hard to reach out to citizens. They go to houses determined by the street organization. Leyla explained the structure to me: “Based on the AKP’s organizational structure, there is the General Structure, the women’s organization and youth organization. This is same at all levels. At the street level there are general organizations, women’s organization and youth organization. The street organization decides on the homes we visited. They gather the people. They organize everything and candidates go there. If the meeting is held for women, then the women’s organization plans.”

Levent gave me two different sides of the AKP’s canvassing style. One is very similar with Leyla’s observation, but the other gave me another hint about AKP’s canvassing. Levent said that during election time, the AKP structured their events to see every person in every district. He also added that maybe other parties would do this, but the AKP has more scheduled programme. “Every day at 6 am the program starts. The program is defined hour by hour. Organization members supervise the candidates to see if they follow the program to the very minute. In addition, these supervisors are randomly checked by the central organization. They are called from local organizations, because they also have the program of candidates. The organization checks the

organization. They also write a report to the municipal head. He checks through report.” He also said that the basic component of canvassing during election time is showing up. “Candidates are just saying ‘we are here, and we care about you.’ This is the main idea of canvassing. Not much to do with political talk.”

The AKP’s canvassing tradition goes back to the early years of the Milli Gorus Organization. While the AKP uses the same structure, there is another aspect that must be discussed. During election time and Ramadan, the party routinely engages with poor neighborhoods. For example, the peripheral neighborhoods of Istanbul, such as of Sultanbeyli, Sultangazi and Umraniye a mostly vote for the AKP,

During interviews, it was interesting to hear that the party mostly deals with the lower strata of society. I asked Levent about this and he mentioned that the party holds different meetings for social classes:

“One of the founding members of the AKP organized some meetings and I attended two of them. This guy was an officer of the party, but during these meeting he was not on duty. He set these meetings at the request of the chairman (Recep Tayyip Erdogan). He was asked to gather people from different backgrounds, which are not necessarily AKP voters. People from the upper classes of society are gathered by this person. Businessmen, journalists, civil society members and artists attended these meetings. In one of them, I saw Ajda Pekkan.”

He said that in these meetings, one of the top officials from the party would ask the guests their opinions about different subjects. “The meetings are organized based on one subject. For example, the Kurdish Issue was one of them. A new constitution was another subject. These meetings were held to hear different feedbacks or criticisms before they take action about a subject matter.” He said that he attended these meetings in the late 2000s.

Ayşe also mentioned that she and other party officials held meetings with citizens from the upper strata of society. She said that they attend specific social gatherings where civil society members, doctors and headmasters of schools discuss their problems. She said that if there any subjects that need to be dealt with, then she meets all the people relevant to that subject.

Based on these responses about canvassing, I can say that the AKP has two different policies for society. First, the organization is always ready to meet people who are in need of anything. The machine discussed in Chapter 4 exists for those who continuously ask to serve the party and vote for the AKP. I will call them the AKP's basic constituents. Yet on the other hand, since the AKP appeals to more than one group in society, they also have different mechanisms for groups apart from their base. They engage and operate day to day with their basic vote stores, as well as during election periods and Ramadan. The party also organize more elite gatherings to appeal to the upper social strata. The organizations that deal with the lower strata and upper strata are not necessarily the same, and they do not need to be in touch. The outcomes of their actions are managed by the general headquarters and executives of the party.

## § 5.2 The Boundaries of Social Security: What Do Citizens Ask from The Party?

In Chapter 4. 2, I noted that party buildings are always open for citizens. Every week day, deputies are present in the headquarters and for weekends, one of the deputies are on watch duty. The main reason for this is that the party wants people to come and talk with them. One can say that it increases the engagement between the party and citizens. Since the AKP has been in government all these years, they have access to social distribution mechanisms. The AKP also holds the majority of the mayorships across Turkey, which means that party officials have access to the services of mayors. As stated in Chapter 4.2, requests from all citizens are noted by officials. If the official can answer the demand, then can do it quickly. Otherwise, they have to record the request. At this point, I asked the interviewees, "what kind of requests did citizens ask from you?" The answers from Ayşe, Levent and Leyla tell us that there is a different kind of relationship between the party and their supporters.

According to Ayşe, requests range from drug abuse to disabled people: "Parents who have drug addicted children are coming. Also, parents who have disabled children are coming, since they want us to give them a wage for the

disabled. Requests about elderly wages is another issue that I encounter. People who are living in the street are coming in here. I redirect them to the Local Health Authority. We are very busy with meeting the requests. Sometimes, I see people in need on TV shows and I am calling the related state institutions to help them. Sometimes, people are just sending me messages on the phone if there is an emergency. Since we have access to the state authorities' people are mostly asking help from us." At this point, I asked her what kind of relation do they have at the state level? She said that if people want help from us, I have to know if they are already getting any help from the district governor, city governor or mayor. We are asking this information based on the citizen's ID number. "If they are really not getting help from any other authority, then we redirect them to the related agencies."

These points reveal much about the AKP's relation to the state. At the very beginning of my conversation with Ayşe, she said that, "we are the government. We need to answer people's need. We have to fix their problems." It seems that she feels that the party has a burden to help people. For fixing problems or answering the requests, there is a close relationship between the state bureaucracy and the party. She said that, "we are not supervisors of bureaucracy or mayors, but we have a close relationship. When we ask to fix a problem, they are doing it based on our mutual relationship."

Leyla added an interesting request to the list: "Some people are asking about issues related to the mayor. For example, they want a tree cut from their street, but they think the municipality would not do this if they ask. Instead, they come directly to the party. One of them said he wants to be married. He asked the party to find him a partner. They have trust in this party more than any other institution."

Levent also confirmed that ordinary people are coming to the party for their multiple requests, rather than going to other state institutions. Requests are often related with social security issues, which one can say that the AKP has a strong record on. But the party's method to handle the issue reveals that it has strong ties with local state officials. We do not know the details of this relation. The AKP has been in power for more than 15 years now. Party members mentioned that every day, they have visitors from 8 am to 6 pm. We also know that the AKP has the same organization in every city with the same

structure. I can say that throughout the years, the AKP has managed to use state power in their organizational efficiency to appeal to people and meet their demands. At the very least, they have generated a vision for this. The local branches became an organization trusted by the citizens. The AKP's open door policy and its ability to use state power to answer the demands of the people not only ensures their votes, but also generates mutual trust between the party and their constituents.

This mutual relation with AKP and its constituents is the key point to understand the success of the AKP from the party organization perspective. This is the reason for the people to follow the lead of the AKP. Tuğal argues that the AKP successfully integrated ex Islamists, conservatives, urban poor and liberals under its regime<sup>2</sup>. The backbone of this integration is the trust of the people. This is beyond a formal relation between an institution and a citizen. This is an intimate relation which is seen in the demands of the citizens<sup>3</sup>.

### § 5.3 Party Members: Why Are They in The Game?

The AKP created a system that is aimed to keep them in power. This never ending system (which I called a machine in the previous chapter) needs muscle power to keep its existence. Party members at all levels form this political machine's human power. Since all interviewees confirmed that the party does not pay for its organization's members, I suppose that there are thousands of volunteers. Ministers, MPs, mayors, local executives, youth organizations, women's organizations and district organizations are the main organizational levels. Since we know they are working so hard, it is an important question to ask: Why do they do this job? There should be some motivation to pursue such high intensity party work day and night. When I asked this question to interviewees, six of them gave me similar answers. Only Leyla and Levent responded with alternative options.

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2 De Leon, Desai, and Tuğal, *Building Blocs*, 100.

3 Doğan, "Mahelledeki AKP," 73.

Most of them highlighted the duty of service to the country. Ayşe said that since childhood, she considers service as a prayer. Others emphasized the national conscience. Apparently, they attribute a divine role to politics. Leyla elaborated her thoughts: “When I was in AKP I always thought about this question, because I spent six months and it was unbearable. Why do they do this for their entire life? First of all, they became addicted to the attention. Secondly, they identify themselves with this sense of belonging to the party.” For this belonging part, Leyla thinks that the AKP’s role on women is very significant. She said that members of the women’s organizations identify themselves with the party and are able to have some freedom from their home. A similar point was made by Sevinc Doğan in her book. She says that for women belonging the party activities creates change on their lifestyles, style of speaking and their political tone<sup>4</sup>

According to Levent, there are three main reasons for people who joined the AKP: “Some of them, especially those who are part of the liberal wing in the early years of the party, think that they are part of a good cause. Secondly, holding power is quite tempting. When you are in the organization, you may have influence on the policies generated by the government. Lastly, money is the reason for some of them.” He gave an example of how businessmen engage in state biddings: “I know a family firm that didn’t engage in state bids. Even though they supported the AKP, they did not get any economic help from the party. Yet at the end, as I heard, they now engage in these bids. Is this corruption? I do not think so. This emerges as a result of a network.” Doğan also pointed out this in her book. She highlights the importance of the party patronage and networks within the dynamic relations of the party members<sup>5</sup>. Actually, she defines the AKP as a field in which there are different relations, coalitions, rules and games<sup>6</sup>. Certainly, the patronage relations of the party members and their financial contributors are the main denominator in this field.

The motivations of members and volunteers are related with the party’s muscle need. As discussed in the previous chapter, the AKP’s aim has been

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4 Sevinç Doğan, “Mahalledeki AKP,” *Parti İşleyişi, Taban Mobilizasyon ve Siyasal Yabancılaşma*. İstanbul, 2016, 227.

5 Doğan, 177.

6 Doğan, 12.

expanding and by doing this the party created a hegemony together with its policies. For the expanding the party's grassroots operations the party needs volunteers and members. The circulation of the members supplied the need of men to the party. On the other hand, the party should supply the demands its members. The socio-economic relations within the party is meaningful when considering this mechanism. As Doğan also puts it, the party seeks economic capital for its rising members<sup>7</sup>. This reveals the members are economically satisfied when they devoted themselves to the party work.

In addition to the economic and social status of the members and leaders in the party, the AKP also has a merit-based system for rising within the party. Doğan says it is related with the 'political capital' which means being politically successful<sup>8</sup>. In this sense it can be said that the party has a merit based rewarding system. Yet I also have to say that the party's inner mechanisms towards members and volunteers should be deeply analyzed with a wider research. Because the status of the members of the grassroots organizations is the key factor of the integral party. They are the mediator between the party and its constituents. Any changes in their status might have an effect on the status of the AKP's hegemony. This thesis gives an explanation for the AKP's hegemony's establishing times.

#### § 5.4 Networking Within the Party: Old and New Habits

Based on its organization's habits AKP show that it is more professionalized version of its predecessors. The leaders of AKP had a long history with Milli Gorus Movement. They learned and executed the politics in different parties of Milli Gorus Movement. When they left the Milli Gorus and established the AKP, the new party became an updated, professionalized version of old Milli Gorus parties. The new party is not the same with Milli Gorus examples but it also is not totally different from Milli Gorus parties.

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7 Doğan, 103.

8 Doğan, 104.

There are different examples that we can see this. The party's networking system is one of the indicators.

As explained in Jenny White's ethnography, the Welfare Party's organization had a social network system that powered its success<sup>9</sup>. During my research, I personally encountered this. The interviewees' stories about how they ended up in politics mentioned links to their Milli Gorus background. Mehmet's uncle introduced him to Erbakan by kissing his hands. Mustafa's father was a friend of one of Erbakan's followers. Hasan went to an Imam Hatip School and met with Erbakan followers there. Ayşe gave me in-depth information. Her father was in politics during Erbakan's tenure. Now, she is a member of the AKP. She said that when she was young, the RP offered her a position in the party, because they knew her family. She did not attend to politics, because she was in school. Later, the AKP offered her a position. The old family network system is still alive to find a trusted member for the party's organization. The AKP still has many members and officials who have a Milli Gorus background.

However, the AKP's years of existence led it to create their own generation. When it was first established in 2001, the AKP had members from different parties and ideologies. From Milli Gorus, MHP, Center Parties like DYP and ANAP, the AKP also had members from center left parties. In that time, the AKP's top officials spent their youth during the 70s either in Milli Gorus youth organizations or other parties' youth organizations. Throughout the years, the AKP managed to create its own youth organization and its own generation.

Looking at the party's website (all the information about its members are on the party's website), we can see that today's top official starts their political career with AKP's youth organization. For example, one of the members of the Central Executive Committee has an interesting political career. He was a member of the AKPs youth organization in a metropolitan city. Then, he became the head of the youth organization for that city. He then became the chairman of the youth organization for the country. After serving one term, he became MP. Now, he is a member of the executive committee. There are many examples of this type of career within the AKP.

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9 White, *Islamist Mobilization in Turkey*.

Ismail's remarks about the youth organization are enlightening. He said that his friends from when he was working with the organization now became MPs or deputies in the party. He also said that it is possible to become state official. "The youth organization," he added, "is the future of the party." Apart from their day to day jobs and duties in the party, according to Ismail, members of the youth organization also socialize in different occasions. He said they made informal meetings where they talk about football, their jobs, among other issues.

From this point, the party becomes a place for socialization, for identifying themselves, a place for women with certain freedoms contrary to their lives, a chance to have a better position in the state. The organization and the position of the party in society resembles Weber's definition of the bureaucratic model described in the previous chapter. With socialization of members within the party and their self-identification of themselves with the party we can say that the party has a tendency to be a place like *esprit de corps* which make this organization a unique structure rather than a political party<sup>10</sup>.

The party's organization is an important hub for conservatives with respect to its access to the resources. As Leyla pointed out that one-person donated millions of dollars to the party for being MP candidate at the last in the order, being in relation with the party has certain advantages. An economic advantage is very likely. In addition to being in relation with the party, the party's members and volunteers have also opportunity to become MPs, mayors and being selected to other offices. Moreover, since the party is the only power in the government, the certain positions in the state are also accessible thorough the AKP. The patronage relations that is explained in the historical background chapter is not just valid for the business, but it is also valid for the members, volunteers and supporters. In this sense, the party is the one of the important institutions for accessing the state power, economic well-being and etc.

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10 Weber, *Economy and Society*, 1:1037.



## Conclusion

In early 2000s AKP was established to create a new alternative for the political system. The young generation within the Millî Görüş movement wanted to create a coalition together with the help of ex-members of centrist parties like Anavatan Partisi (The Motherland Party, or ANAP) and Doğru Yol Partisi (The True Path Party, or DYP) to rule the country. The leaders of the AKP were ex-Islamists, yet their discourses had differences from old Islamist parties. Rather than using the discourse or policies of the Millî Görüş movement, the AKP adapted its organization with an updated version of Millî Görüş.

Other than internal party organization what would be the reasons for AKP's almost 20 years of domination in Turkish politics? This thesis is written for emphasizing the importance of party organization in the long-term electoral success. However, even in the case of AKP, the internal party dynamics are not the sole reason for the party's success.

As shown in the previous chapters, the AKP used practices inherited from their predecessors. Yet the AKP added new rules and regulations which enabled them to organize both their ideological bloc and other segments of society.

At this point it should be clearly understood that the AKP's members and volunteers have defined tasks and responsibilities. Attending regular party meetings, using reporting mechanism efficiently, obeying party's unwritten

rules, participating and organizing party events regularly are some of the important tasks for party members. For the AKP, keeping mobility within the party is the most important aim. By keeping members dynamic, the party is able to increase its mobility in certain times like Ramadan and pre-election. In addition to this, the party's hierarchical organization makes it possible to implement rules efficiently. By combining all these characteristics, it is possible to argue that the AKP has a compact structure, from its street level volunteers to its chairman, which enables the party to implement any discourse or policies successfully. When there is this kind of an organization which operates constantly to influence people, the party does not need special individuals because the organization is working on its own.

The impressive part of this organization is its mutual relationship with voters, constituents and individuals. Either the party goes to the people, for canvassing or asking votes, or individuals go to the party to demand certain requests. When the party goes to the people, members just express their willingness to help and serve them. Since this appealing happens constantly, the party became the only source for achieving certain wishes for the public. This brings us to the second part of the mutual relationship which contains a wide array of demands from social security to strictly private topics.

Putting together all these variables it is possible to say that the AKP is using its creative mechanism to operate in society. In other words, the party moves beyond a classical definition of a political party and exemplifies a different social structure. As De Leon et al argues that the political articulation is only possible when parties are 'able' to implement this articulation.<sup>1</sup> The AKP's never ending operations within society shows that it is able to carry out such an articulation.

However, it should be noted again in here that the internal party organization is not the only reason of the AKP's years of domination in the Turkish politics. The founding leaders of AKP used several aspects for defining the party: Its ideology, economic policies, foreign policy orientations and internal policies. The AKP seized the political opportunity in all these areas. Party organization is one of the aspects that the AKP has. The importance may be

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1 De Leon, Desai, and Tuğal, *Building Blocs*, 2.

given to the party itself since all the strategies are created within the party. For example, one of my interviewees was member of the founding committee of the AKP. He said he was chosen by the local leaders for representing them in the founding committee. The founding committee defined the ideology, economic policy implications and foreign policy proposals. If these local leaders did not give consent to these policies, was it possible to implement them? In my opinion the importance of the organization lays within this mentality. The AKP used its human power, its organization and volunteers, successfully like it used the political circumstances wisely.

For the further research and current situation within the AKP it should also be noted that the party faced interesting declines in its operations. The AKP lost municipal seats in the last local election even if it had an alliance with MHP. There should be more research about the party's organization which will focus on post 2017 period. After the referendum the power of the President increased dramatically over the other state institutions including judiciary and parliament. This kind of a centralization of state power might affected the AKP's internal dynamics. Overall, as pointed out in the Introduction of this thesis the party also has not seen a leader changed yet. The future of the party machine and its effects should be examined based on these variables.

The last local elections also were a major loss for the AKP. The party lost six big cities in this election. First time its history AKP faced this kind of an election loss. In addition to this, the party used its effect on the judiciary and state mechanism to renew the elections in Istanbul which they lost in the local elections took place in 31 March 2019. The candidate of the opposition party, Ekrem İmamoğlu won the election with more than 10.000 votes. When the election renewed, İmamoğlu won the election more than 800000 votes. This creates a much more major problem for the AKP. In relation with the topic of this thesis the question is how the AKP faced this kind of a loss?

First, it should be noted that CHP's organization worked harder than before for this local election. Again, the importance of the organization can be seen in this stance. On the other hand, there are multiple reasons for the loss of the AKP which are related both its organization and other issues as well.

After the referendum in 2017 Turkey turned into a presidential system from parliamentary system. The aim of this referendum was increasing the power of the president, R. Tayyip Erdoğan, and making him member of AKP again. When he was elected president in 2014, he had resigned from the AKP based on the law. Yet the presidential system increased the president's power dramatically and this not just affected the politics and the state but also affected the party. The importance of the party slightly moved to the importance of the leader. In fact, as discusses in previous chapters, there were sign of this when the party started to lose its council structure. In this sense, for the future research it should be noted that AKP's inner organization 's relation with the state and its leaders should be analyzed based the change for the state system. The presidential system might affect the party work in a negative way.

Secondly the economic issues are significantly important for explaining the AKP's hegemony and also its loss. Since the Summer of 2018 turkey has been under the severe effect of the economic crisis. Was economy one of the reasons behind AKP's recent loss? It might be. Yet, when the AKP established won its first electoral victory's the economy was then also star topic for the politics. In chapter 3 I discussed the AKP's economic policies with respect to its hegemonic project. For the further research the economic explanation should be also analyzed. The AKP certainly used economy for its hegemonic project. However, the effect of the economy on the loss of the AKP's last election also should be analysis of a research.

For understanding the effect of the organization and its descriptive meaning, the relation between party and the state must analyzed. In the chapter 5, the interviewee Ayşe told me that they have mutual respect with state officials and in this way, they can solve problems when citizens ask from them. In this sense, the social security is the only part that the state is active. There are other issues that are under the effect of the state authorities. The education and security can be sorted within these issues. What is the effect of the parties on the state level regarding these issues? This question lays in the heart of today's systemic change also. There are AKP dominated state bureaucracy which is expected to have a good relation with the party. Yet it is important to answer this question for both rise and recent loss of the AKP.

In addition to this the interim period between 2017-2018 in which the President was leader of the party and Turkey has not turned into a presidential system should also be analyzed with respect to the party structure and leader's effect. If the leader became too important for decision-making processes then the effect of the party in under the questions<sup>2</sup>.

This thesis aimed to explain the AKP's organization's effects on the its long hegemony over Turkish politics. The organizational work is not the only reason for the AKP's hegemony but it has a certain effect. To assess the real power of the organizations effect on the political articulation and hegemony, there is a great opportunity. The recent loss of the AKP, which has been perceived for a long time but seen recently, should be followed with carefully. When all the effects are seen and analyzed, the party organizations status and works might be clearly observed.

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2 The leader has been always important for the party but he gained tremendous authority with recent constitutional changes. How these changes affect the party? This would be another important issue for the further research.



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