DISSENT AND POWER: THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE ISLAMIST CRITIQUE OF
THE STATE IN TURKEY SINCE THE 1990S

By

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the transformation of the Islamic political thought in Turkey since the 1990s from a dissenting ideology which criticizes the existing state establishment to a state-centric worldview integrated into the existing political system. The study focusses on an Islamic political magazine of the 1990s, Yeni Zemin, and the later writings of its major authors who are key members of the Islamic intelligentsia in Turkey. The thesis argues that although the moderation of Islamist critique of the state establishment can be traced back to the aftermath of February 28 military intervention, the longevity of the AKP rule and the party's ability to integrate both different Islamic social groups and Muslim intellectuals into the existing socio-political system is more decisive in the ideological moderation process. The content-based analysis of the writings of Muslim intellectuals covers three different periods. First, the Islamic political thought of the mid-1990s is explored through a close reading of Yeni Zemin whose main editorial line revolves around offering a radical opposition to the existing political system by invoking liberal democratic concepts. Second, a scrutiny of the writings of major Yeni Zemin authors in the aftermath of February 28 (1998-2004) singles out this event and its aftermath as the starting point of the moderation of the Islamist critique of the state. Finally, the same intellectuals are examined in the period between 2008 and 2014 in which the AKP consolidated its political power as Turkey's ruling party. The analysis shows that the duration of the AKP rule brings forth the crystallization of ideological moderation among intellectuals close to the party.

Keywords: Muslim intellectuals, Islamic dissent, moderate Islam, moderation-inclusion, democratization, 1990s, Yeni Zemin, February 28, AKP.

ÖZET

Bu tez, Türkiye'deki İslami siyasal düşüncenin 1990lardan günümüze, devlet kavramına karşı eleştirel, muhalif bir ideolojiden mevcut siyasal sisteme eklemlenmiş devlet merkezli bir dünya görüşüne doğru dönüşümünü incelemektedir. Çalışma 1990ların İslami siyasi dergilerinden Yeni Zemin'e ve bu derginin Türkiye İslami entelijansiyasının önde gelen yazarlarının daha sonraki yazılarına odaklanmaktadır. Tez, devletin İslamcı eleştirisindeki yumuşamanın 28 Şubat askeri müdahalesiyle başlasa da AKP döneminin sürekliği ve partinin hem farklı İslami toplum kesimlerini hem de Müslüman entelektüelleri mevcut sosyo-politik sisteme eklemlemedeki başarısının ideolojik ılımlaşma süreci için daha belirleyici olduğunu savunmaktadır. Müslüman entelektüellerin yazılarının içerik temelli analizi üç farklı dönemi kapsamaktadır. İlk olarak, 1990lar ortasının İslami siyasal düşüncesi Yeni Zemin üzerinden incelenmiş ve derginin Türkiye'deki mevcut sisteme karşı, liberal demokrasinin kavramlarından faydalanarak, radikal bir muhalif çizgi tutturduğu gözlenmiştir. Daha sonra, Yeni Zemin'in etkin yazarlarının 28 Şubat'ı takip eden dönemdeki (1998-2004) yazıları, bu olayın ve takip eden sürecin devletin İslamcı eleştirisinin yumuşamasının bu dönemde başladığını ortaya koymuştur. Son olarak, aynı entelektüeller, AKP'nin Türkiye siyasetindeki gücünü pekiştirdiği 2008 ve 2014 arası dönemde incelenmiştir. İnceleme özellikle partiye yakın olan entelektüellerin söylemlerindeki ideolojik ılımlaşmanın AKP döneminin sürekliliğiyle billurlaştığını göstermektedir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Müslüman entelektüeller, İslami muhalefet, ılımlı İslam, ılımlılık-içindeleme (tazammun), demokratikleşme, 1990lar, Yeni Zemin, 28 Şubat, AKP.

To my family

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Finally, I am indebted to all my family members for their moral support. I dedicate my thesis to my family whom I mostly neglected during this process.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

The immense success of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) in the 2002 General Elections, which supervened upon a period when the Islamic political movement was harshly suppressed by the state, brought the party to the office. In its early years in power, the AKP maintained a particular political position, "conservative democratic", advocating the compatibility of the Islamic identity of individuals with democratic politics. The party cadres articulated a pro-democracy, pro-EU discourse which allowed the party to rally the support not only of business groups and liberal intellectuals but also of the popular masses. Scholars of Islamic political movement in Turkey point out to the incorporation of democratic values such as pluralism, civil society and political participation into an Islamic worldview in the 1990s by prominent members of the Islamic intelligentsia in Turkey as a factor facilitating the formation of the AKP's new discourse. For a party which sprang from *Milli Görüş* [National Outlook], a more traditional political Islamic movement, this pro-democratic discourse is often considered to be a product of Islamists' pro-system transformation.

Seen from this perspective, the recent transformation of the AKP can, at best, be described as an anomaly. Especially since the party's third electoral victory in 2011, the AKP has increasingly been relying on a populist discourse which features democracy only as a means to

render the popular will coming out of the ballot box to reign supreme and reflects the ideal to rejuvenate a "Greater Turkey". Nevertheless, this discourse, frequently enunciated by the party's charismatic leader Recep Tayyip Erdoğan[1] with religious and nationalist references, has not undermined the popularity of the party among its electorate base. On the contrary, it appears that the AKP consolidated its legitimacy in the certain segments of the society thanks to its alternate discourse. In view of the recent changes in the AKP's discourse, political stance and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's allegedly authoritarian tendencies, some received ideas and established academic perceptions on the AKP need to be revisited within a historical perspective. This is this thesis' main goal although attention will also be given to the merits of the ongoing public discussion concerning the party's alleged hidden Islamic agenda or its distanciation from its moderate Islamic position and adoption of a pre-2000 Islamist ideology.

It is important to note, however, that much of the surprise caused both in academia and the public concerning this alleged sudden transformation owes to a lack of solid premises, particularly with regard to the definition of Islamism or what Islamists are supposed to stand for. My thesis then, also offers an in-depth exploration of Islamic political thought in Turkey since the 1990s which has hitherto only been perfunctorily dealt with and which is nonetheless essential if we are to understand the Islamic movement in Turkey both before and during the AKP era. Based on an analysis of writings of key figures among the Islamic intelligentsia, the present study problematizes the existing narratives in the literature that explain Islamic moderation and/or within-system evolution as a process conducive to democratization and argue that Islamic political thought of the 1990s ideationally underpinned the moderation process with its unique discourse blended in concepts such as democracy, civil society and human rights. The

[1] Recep Tayyip Erdoğan became the first popularly elected president of the Republic of Turkey in August 2014. After the elections, he stepped down as the AKP leader to claim the presidential office.

dominant account in the literature suggests the moderate Islamic stance of the AKP as a marriage of Islamic political identity and democracy. Moreover, the members of Islamic intelligentsia are suggested as the actors facilitated the ideological moderation of the Islamic political movement as they embrace democracy, pluralism and promote a new understanding of civil Islam as opposed to political Islam. As such, both in academia and the public, the post-2011 transformation of the AKP is often perceived as a departure from this pro-democratic moderation of the Islamic political movement. This thesis problematizes the established link between moderation, democratization and the political system in Turkey and offers an alternative account for the process of ideological moderation within political Islamic movement in Turkey through scrutinizing the contemporary Islamic political thought in Turkey from a historical perspective.

The thesis argues that the Islamic political thought in Turkey has transformed since the 1990s from a dissenting ideology to a conservative worldview which is incorporated into the existing political system. While the dissenting Islamist critique in the 1990s call for a wholesale change in the political system, the systemic worldview of the same intellectuals often advocate a restoration of the system from within. This argument is based on the analysis of *Yeni Zemin*, a monthly political magazine of the mid-1990s, and of the writings of major *Yeni Zemin* authors in the aftermath of the February 28 military intervention (1998-2005) and during the second and third terms of AKP rule (2008-2014). *Yeni Zemin* is a platform of vibrant discussions among the most influential members of Islamic intelligentsia in Turkey such as Abdurrahman Dilipak, Ali Bulaç, Altan Tan and Mehmet Metiner. The Islamic political thought of the 1990s exemplified by *Yeni Zemin* offers a fierce critique of the existing political system in Turkey, holds the state accountable for all the major problems in Turkey and points out to the necessity of changing the political system altogether. By the early 2010s, however, the Islamic political thought in the

writings of major Yeni Zemin authors largely abandons the critique of the state establishment in Turkey and shifts towards a more state-centric and conservative discourse.

Although this may seem like an obvious symptom of the AKP's consolidation of power, I highlight a more complex by pointing out to the process of ideological moderation which refers to a shift in intellectuals' and ideologues' discourse from a radical critique of the existing political system to the advocacy of restoring the existing system. This process at work in the trajectory of contemporary Islamic political thought is explained in three stages: (I) the radical opposition to the existing political system by utilizing liberal democratic notions which I discuss through a reading of Yeni Zemin; (II) the beginning of the process of moderation which has started with the February 28 and encompassed most of the intellectuals; and (III) the crystallization of ideological moderation among majority of the intellectuals as well as the division among ex-Yeni Zemin authors during the height of the AKP rule. My findings suggest that the changes in the intellectuals' discourses are mostly determined by their party affiliations as the AKP managed to build hegemony over different Islamic segments of the society as well as Muslim intellectuals. Finally, the discursive shifts in Islamic political thought after 2008[2] do not refer to a turning back to Islamism of 1990s. Rather, these shifts indicate the integration of the Islamist critique into the existing socio-political system in Turkey.

The thesis focuses on the Islamic intelligentsia in Turkey from a historical perspective for a number of reasons. First, studying intellectuals is important because of their success in influencing both the general public, as will be discussed in more detail below. The members of

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[2] Especially in public debates there is not any consensus as to when the shift in AKP discourse and policies started. Ergenekon trials and their aftermath, 2010 Constitutional Referendum, 2011 General Elections and even Gezi Park protests in 2013 are all pointed out as dramatic events for the transformation of the AKP government. I do not intend to single out any one of these events I will discuss in Chapter V. Instead, I conceive of these post-2008 events as part of a process within which the AKP change its discourse and policies.

the Islamic intelligentsia are "popular public intellectuals" in the sense that they claim to give voice to the discontent of a broader Islamic segment of the society with the existing political system in Turkey and have great appeal among the masses advocating an Islamic identity.[3] Second, the rising publicity and popularity of intellectuals in the 1990s enhanced their capacity to raise a political consciousness in accord with their ideology and enabled them to exert influence on Islamist politicians.[4] Third, analyzing the writings of these intellectuals allows us to delineate the historical trajectory of Islamic political thought more adequately than examining the discourses of the party, or of political actors, since the latter can be shaped by the exigencies of the political environment and reflects strategic behaviors rather than ideological commitments.

Although there is substantial research on intellectuals of the Islamic movement in Turkey, most of the studies date to the late 1980s and early 1990s. These earlier studies concerned themselves with the explanation of the socio-historical conditions within which the new generations of Islamic intelligentsia was born. Therefore, they are rather descriptive in terms of analyzing the ideas of intellectuals. However, in a few recent studies, too, the ideas of the members of Islamic intelligentsia are not scrutinized from a historical perspective with the exception of an unpublished PhD dissertation of Burak Özçetin. Thus, this body of literature does not offer a broad perspective for evolution(s) or transformation(s) in Islamist thinking. Moreover, in most of these studies, the Islamic intelligentsia is presented as a cohesive, conflict-free and even monolithic social group for the sake of a complete account. They do not address inner conflicts and quarrels among the intellectuals. Nevertheless, the contribution of this body of literature provides an analytical perspective to examine the Islamic intelligentsia from the 1990s

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[3] Sena Karasipahi, *Muslims in Modern Turkey: Kemalism, Modernism and the Revolt of the Islamic Intellectuals* (New York: IB Tauris & Co Ltd, 2009), 65.
[4] Güneş Murat Tezcür, *Muslim Reformers in Iran and Turkey: Paradox of Moderation*, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2005), 18.

through the present time. Therefore, in the next part, I will elaborate on the studies concerning the intellectuals of the Islamic movement in Turkey.

I.I. Muslim Intellectuals in Turkey

Among the most remarkable aspects of Turkish Islamism in the post-1980 period is its ability to generate a sui generis Islamic intelligentsia. What makes this group of Islamist intellectuals so original is not that they developed a counter-hegemonic voice against the Kemalist establishment. Since the 1940's, figures such as Necip Fazıl Kısakürek, Eşref Edib, Nurettin Topçu and Sezai Karakoç had already expressed their discontent with the Kemalist republic through an Islamic rhetoric. Although they influenced Turkish Islamic thought and movements to a great extent, their main motivation, as Hakan Yavuz indicates, is not to establish an Islamic state and society but to rejuvenate the Ottoman past where Islam was supposedly a building brick of Anatolian/Turkish culture.[5] Thus, the theological aspects of Islam are not in the foundation of their worldview. The post-1980 Islamic intelligentsia is unique for the manner in which it established its counter-hegemonic rhetoric, its response to contemporary problems and its alternatives to current social and political institutions. Their foremost endeavor is to dissociate Islamism from conservative and nationalist right-wing political traditions and take Islam as the sole outlet for their ideology.[6] They distance themselves from the aforementioned names and refuse to be associated to a particular school of thought or tradition. This group of intellectuals is

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[5] M. Hakan Yavuz, *Islamic Political Identity in Turkey* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 114.
[6] Cihan Aktaş, "İslami Hayat Tarzının Yeniden Keşfi" in *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasal Düşünce, Vol. 9: Dönemler ve Zihniyetler*, ed. Ömer Laçiner (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2009), 651-668.

conceptualized as a "new Muslim intellectual class" and investigated as a historical phenomenon by a small body of literature.[7]

In Turkey, and in other parts of the Muslim world, the most significant factor in the Islamist revival is the change in the country's demographic structure. The religious identity of the rural and newly-urbanized peripheral segments of Turkish society unfolded with the massive migration to urban centers throughout the 1950s, 1960's and 1970's.[8] What made the rise of the Islamic movement possible after the 1980's was to a great extent the mobilization of the youth among these new urbanites around a religious identity. According to the useful profile Michael Meeker provides, most of the members of this new Muslim intellectual class, as well as their readership, were living in a metropolis whereas their parents have their origins in the province.[9] Thus, it is important to note that Muslim intellectuals and their readers adapt to the urban life and are accustomed to certain urban/bourgeois values and dispositions. Nilüfer Göle underscores the importance of the cultural capital they acquired.[10] Muslim intellectuals were educated in the modern/secular institutions of the Republic which led them to accumulate a different sort of cultural capital than for instance the ulema[11]; and this educational formation certainly influenced their intellectual attitude. Consequently, the common point in almost all the studies concerning Muslim intellectuals of post-1980 is this paradox: On the one hand they were trained in secular

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[7] See for example, Michael Meeker, "The New Muslim Intellectuals in the Republic of Turkey" in *Islam in Modern Turkey: Religion, Politics and Literature in a Secular State* ed. Richard Tapper (New York: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 1994), 189-223; Nilüfer Göle, "Secularism and Islamism in Turkey: The Making of Elites and Counter-Elites", *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 51, No. 1 (Winter, 1997), 46-58; Karasipahi, *Muslims in Modern Turkey*. In the rest of the chapter I will call this small body of literature as "Muslim intellectuals literature".
[8] Yavuz, *Islamic Political Identity in Turkey*, passim.
[9] Meeker, "The New Muslim Intellectuals in the Republic of Turkey".
[10] Göle, "Secularism and Islamism in Turkey: The Making of Elites and Counter-Elites"; Alev Erkilet, "1990'larda Radikal İslamcılık" in *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasal Düşünce Vol. 6: İslamcılık*, ed. Yasin Aktay (İstanbul: İletişim, 2006), 682-697.
[11] With a very few exceptions, none of these people were trained in religious sciences in *medrese* (madrasa) or *imam-hatip* (prayer and preacher) high school and *ilahiyat* (divinity) faculty. See Meeker (1994) and Karasipahi (2009).

educational institutions, mastered in extra-religious subjects with modern/Western curricula and they engaged Western philosophy and thought; on the other hand, they criticize all these non-Islamic factors that partially created their intellectual outlook and seek for Islamic alternatives to them.[12]

Muslim intellectuals are foremost critical of the values and concepts they associate with modern Western thought such as secularism, humanism, positivism and rationalism. According to this new generation of Muslim intellectuals who write under the influence of postmodern intellectual currents, the pillars of modern Western thought originally developed as reactions against the dominance of the Church in the West. Sena Karasipahi argues that, based on their conceptualization of differences between Islam and Christianity as well as Western and (Middle) Eastern societies, Muslim intellectuals consider the reactions against the Catholic Church simply irrelevant in Islamic context. Therefore, the Western socio-political system which is shaped by the secular struggle against the Church is incompatible with Muslim societies.[13]

Nevertheless, Sena Karasipahi argues that Muslim intellectuals' criticism of the West is not a blindfold rejection of Western-originated concepts.[14] Earlier radical Islamist of mid-20th century considered everything associated to the West as exterior to Islam and straightforwardly rejected Western-originated terms and concepts. First, Muslim intellectuals diverge from the state-centric political Islamic thought of mid-20th century. Unlike the Sharia-based Islamic state ideal of Sayyid Qutb, Mawdudi and Imam Khomeini, Muslim intellectuals of the 1990s do not aim at capturing the state and implement a top-down Islamization. Burak Özçetin puts forth that the main intellectual source of Muslim intellectuals distaste for the ideals of political Islam is the

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[12] Göle "Secularism and Islamism in Turkey", Karasipahi, *Muslims in Modern Turkey*.
[13] Karasipahi, *Muslims in Modern Turkey*, 70.
[14] Ibid., 61.

postmodern critique of the metanarratives and ideologies.[15] According to Özçetin, the political is reduced to "the play of 'cultural differences'" in the thought of Muslim intellectuals.[16]

Second, Muslim intellectuals' understanding of society and civilization is holistic as opposed to the approach of the first generation (modernist) Islamists who sought for ways to adopt scientific and technological progress while keeping the religio-cultural identity intact.[17]. They conceptualize modernity as an indivisible historical product of Western societies. Therefore they extend their critique to the science and technology of the Western societies. Contrary to this secluded attitude, Muslim intellectuals are in a struggle for understanding and transcending the West which is holistically conceptualized as a *sui generis* civilization. In their relations with the West, globalization and postmodernism became two main factors that shaped their attitude during the 1980s and the 1990s. Especially the postmodern critique, to the extent that it dismantles the cultural hegemony of the Westernist/Kemalist elite, provides an intellectually legitimate ground for the Islamist critique of both Kemalism and the Western civilization.[18] Western intellectuals such as Ivan Illich, Paul Fayerabend, and Michel Foucault were embraced by the Muslim intellectuals as critics of the aforementioned Western values. The most enthusiastic followers of the challenge to modernism and positivism are the Muslim intellectuals. In this sense, they become the Turkish counterparts of Western postmodernist thinkers.[19]

In sum, the literature on Turkish Muslim intellectuals mainly highlights the impact of massive urbanization, spread of educational institutions and postmodern critique on Islamic

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[15] Burak Özçetin, "Making of New Islamism in Turkey: Transformation of the Islamist Discourse from Opposition to Compliance", (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Middle East Technical University, 2011), 208.
[16] Ibid.
[17] Meeker, "The New Muslim Intellectuals".
[18] Mücahit Bilici, "Küreselleşme ve Postmodernizmin İslamcılık Üzerindeki Etkileri", in *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasal Düşünce Vol. 6: İslamcılık*, ed. Yasin Aktay (İstanbul: İletişim, 2006), 799-803.
[19] Göle, "Secularism and Islamism in Turkey".

thought in Turkey. Although these studies provide an overall profile of the new generation of Muslim intellectuals in Turkey, they do not address a number of decisive issues which influenced the post-1980 Islamist thought in Turkey such as socio-economic transformations we can identify under the banner of neoliberalism and the end of the Cold War. Neoliberal globalization has an ambivalent impact on Muslim intellectuals. On the one hand, the urban poor who are hit hard by neoliberal policies constitute the main body of population the RP consolidated with its "*Adil Düzen*" (Just Order) project.[20] In Muslim intellectuals' view, these people are among the most willing aspirants of a systemic change due to their worse-off positions. The intellectuals claim to be the voice of these people as well as other social segments which have discontent with the current socio-political system in Turkey. On the other hand, as Özçetin points out, Muslim intellectuals cooperate with "neoliberal critics of the Turkish state who cite the known neoliberal themes such as minimization of the state and privatization".[21] The intellectuals who share these neoliberal notions problematize the *Adil Düzen* discourse of the RP as well. Thus, while Muslim intellectuals claim to be the spokespersons of those who are worse-off by neoliberal policies, they reiterate neoliberalism as part of their critique of the state.

Furthermore, in the sense that it transformed the political as well as intellectual environment on a global scale, the collapse of the Soviet Union is highly central in shaping Muslim intellectuals' worldview. Perhaps the most important ideational outcome of this event is not the end of communism as a historical power bloc but the end of a strong state formation tied to and advocating a certain ideology. Kemalism, as the founding ideology of the Republic, had long been debated and rejected by Islamists in Turkey. Yet my findings suggest that this rejection

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[20] *Adil Düzen* is the economic program of the RP appealed mostly to the urban poor and lower middle-classes with its discourse featuring economic equality and justice. For a more detailed analysis of the RP and *Adil Düzen*, see M. Hakan Yavuz, "Political Islam and the Welfare (Refah) Party in Turkey", *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 30, No. 1 (October, 1997), 63-82.

[21] Özçetin, 209.

is seen as being validated by the collapse of the Soviet Union as it exemplified the end of a particular conception of state based on a certain specific ideology. In other words, the collapse of the Soviet Union is interpreted as the ultimate end of authoritarian and totalitarian regimes which calls for an end to Kemalism in a similar manner. Thus, Kemalism is not rejected only because it ignores the values of popular masses (Islam, of course), but it is also outdated as a system that forcefully imposes an official ideology on its citizens in the "new world order" in which transparent governments and liberal-democratic values are said to be reigning supreme.

While offering a persuasive and insightful analysis of the larger processes at work in the transformation of Islamist thought, these studies do not delve into the peculiarities of Islamist thought, specifically in terms of themes that are central and recurring in Yeni Zemin such as the authors' conceptions of the state, their reservations for democracy and their approach to the Kurdish question, all of which are instrumental issues in contemporary Turkish politics. However, even within this scope their discussions are still insufficiently contextualized. As stated, the literature on Muslim intellectuals does not give us an adequate framework to understand intellectuals in a historical perspective in relation to the transformation of the Islamic movement. The only insightful exception to this critical review is the unpublished PhD dissertation of Burak Özçetin. Özçetin convincingly explicates the transformation in Islamic political thought with detailed contextual explanations. Moreover, he provides a more dynamic analysis through his comparison and contrast of different schools within the contemporary Islamist thought in Turkey. However, his study does not elaborate on the political allegiance of Muslim intellectuals and the dynamics of the relationship between the political system and the intellectuals after the 1990s. Therefore, his account remains inadequate to understand the

trajectory of contemporary Islamic political thought in relation to Muslim intellectuals' stance against the state in Turkey.

I.II. Yeni Zemin

The main purpose of this thesis is to bring the contemporary Islamic political thought into a historical perspective and explain the position of Muslim intellectuals regarding the existing political system in different historical contexts. In so doing, I aim to explicate the transformation of Islamic movement in Turkey. Therefore, I divided my research on the writings of Muslim intellectuals into three periods. First, I analyze the Islamic political thought in the mid-1990s through a close reading of *Yeni Zemin* (*New Grounds*), a popular[22] Islamist magazine I decided to focus on after my preliminary research. Yeni Zemin ("*Aylık Kültür ve Politika Dergisi*" as indicated in its masthead) was a monthly magazine that addresses the important political, social and economic issues and debates of the early 1990's in Turkey. Although the magazine did not last long –only 17 volumes were published from January 1993 to June 1994- each volume deals exhaustively with crucial contemporaneous problems such as state-religion relations, the idea(l) of Islamic state, local governments, the constitution, religious communities and the Kurdish question.

Yeni Zemin was owned by Osman Tunç, the manager of *Zehra Vakfı*, a Nurcu[23] foundation espousing a Kurdish-Islamic identity.[24] The advertisements of the foundation and of

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[22] The magazine is popular in the sense that it addresses to the general public using a simple language and a practical approach, not crowded with sophisticated philosophical debates. I do not have the sales figures to evaluate the popularity of the magazine among the Islamic segments of the society. The magazine was distributed to certain bookstores throughout Turkey but the main medium of circulation was subscription. General delivery to newsstands was not sustained due to financial reasons, as indicated in the editorials.

[23] *Nurcu* is used to refer to the follower of Said Nursi (1877 – 1960), an important Islamic scholar in the late Ottoman and early Republican periods.

[24] Yavuz, *Islamic Political Identity*, 176.

the events, activities and book introductions affiliated to the foundation further indicate the relationship between Yeni Zemin and *Zehra Vakfı*. Mehmet Metiner was the editor of the magazine. Being involved in intellectual activities by publishing several other popular Islamic magazines and books since the 1980s, Metiner was elected to the Turkish Grand National Assembly with the AKP in 2011. The assistant editor was Yalçın Akdoğan who became Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's chief advisor , was elected as an AKP MP in 2011 and 2015 general elections, and was appointed as the vice prime minister in 2014. Altan Tan[25], Davut Dursun[26], Ali Bulaç[27] and Abdurrahman Dilipak[28] were among the members of the editorial board. Thus, in retrospect, the magazine brought together Muslim intellectuals who have remarkably different trajectories such as that of Metiner, Akdoğan, Tan and Bulaç. This diversity in the contributors' personal careers raises questions regarding the context which brought them together and historical processes which have separated them. Furthermore, Yeni Zemin is not only a magazine in which Muslim intellectuals articulate their ideas but also a "platform on which prominent Islamist intellectuals exchanged ideas and experiences with their liberal and conservative counterparts"[29] such as Mehmet Altan, Nilüfer Göle, and Ali Yaşar Sarıbay.

Yeni Zemin was published in a period in which dynamism of intellectual activity within the Islamic movement in Turkey reached its peak. Moreover, the appeal of Islamic politics was on the rise given the growing popularity of the Welfare Party (Refah Partisi [RP]) in the wake of

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[25] Tan was elected to MP with Peace and Democracy Party [Barış ve Demokrasi Partisi (BDP)] in 2011 and re-elected with Peoples' Democratic Party [Halkların Demokratik Partisi (HDP)], as the BDP joined to the former, in 2015. HDP is an opposition party in the parliament whose discourse strikingly contrasts with that of the AKP.

[26] Dursun became the president of Radio and Television Supreme Council (Radyo ve Televizyon Üst Kurulu [RTÜK]) since 2009.

[27] Bulaç has never held a position in politics or bureaucracy. He has been writing in the daily *Zaman* for a long while. *Zaman* is the mouthpiece of Gülen network. Although Bulaç does not explicitly associate himself with this network, he has become increasingly critical of the AKP as the party begun a battle with Gülen network.

[28] Dilipak has been writing in the daily *Yeni Akit*, an Islamist newspaper sympathized with the AKP.

[29] Özçetin, *Making of New Islamism*, 220.

popular discontent with corruption scandals, economic bottlenecks and political crises that marked the political environment in Turkey in the 1990s. As the RP's discourse, relying on promises of transparent governance and economic justice, appealed to the popular masses in the mid-1990s, the party enjoyed electoral successes. Thus, the Islamic movement in Turkey mobilized around more enthusiastic ideals and projects which are mostly developed by Muslim intellectuals. In this context, Yeni Zemin brings together different Islamist intellectuals of different backgrounds and political attitudes (and futures) which together offer an ideational "ground" for the rising Islamic politics in Turkey. This intellectual diversity makes Yeni Zemin a microcosm of Islamist political thought of the 1990s. Therefore, examining the magazine allows us to get a grip on Islamists' approach on the main questions of contemporary Turkey. The analysis will demonstrate that the radical critique of the state establishment in Turkey is formulated in the framework of democratization and liberalization of the political system by Yeni Zemin contributors. The dynamics of Yeni Zemin's opposition to the system will help us contextualizing the contemporary political Islamic thought in Turkey and making sense of the transformations in Yeni Zemin authors' discourses in the aftermath of February 28 and at the height of the AKP rule.

I.III. Outline of the Chapters

The thesis is going to proceed by demonstrating the transformation of the contemporary political Islamic thought in Turkey in different historical settings in the empirical chapters (Chapter III, IV and V). These empirical chapters will follow the conceptual framework of the thesis, presented in Chapter II which is designed to locate the thesis in the existing literature. The chapter will discuss the findings of the literature on political Islamic movements throughout the globe as well as in Turkey with an emphasis on the transformations of Islamic movements during the 1980s and

1990s. The literature review also provides some of the contextual factors I rely on in my reading of the primary sources. The discussion of the existing literature is accompanied by the critic of the scope of these studies and their arguments. In the rest of the chapters I lay down the theoretical and methodological concerns. This part first presents the main pillars of the theories of political moderation and explains the theoretical framework I will employ in the thesis. Then I illustrate the method I employ in reading and interpreting Muslim intellectuals' writings.

In Chapter III, I analyze Muslim intellectuals' conceptions of the state; their ideas about the relationship between the political system, civil society and democracy in Turkey; and their debates on the Kurdish question as a concrete problem concerning the state and democracy in Turkey. Based on my preliminary reading of Yeni Zemin, these themes appeared the most central themes in the magazine which the prolific authors constantly bring up as part of their reservations about the political system in Turkey. Thus, the analysis of Yeni Zemin with a focus on these themes delineates the Islamist critique of the existing political system in the 1990s. I highlight the influence of post-Cold War discourses of liberalism and democracy in shaping the Islamic political thought of the 1990s and Muslim intellectuals' critique of the state establishment in Turkey.

While Yeni Zemin presents the vibrant discussions among Muslim intellectuals in the context of the 1990s, the aftermath of the February 28 military intervention constitutes a new historical setting in terms of reformulating the Islamist critique of the political system in Turkey. Under the conditions of February 28, the RP was knocked out and the Islamic segments of the society were persecuted by militant secular policies of the state. Moreover, reformist RP politicians challenged the leadership of Milli Görüş and founded a new political party which abandoned confrontational position of the RP and maintained a moderate, pro-democratic, pro-

EU discourse. Therefore, after the analysis of Yeni Zemin, in Chapter IV, I trace trajectories of the most prolific and significant authors of the magazine in the aftermath of February 28. I examine the writings of Mehmet Metiner, Ali Bulaç, Altan Tan, Ümit Aktaş, Davut Dursun, Yalçın Akdoğan, Rasim Özdenören and Abdurrahman Dilipak between 1998 and 2004. Based on various written sources, the analysis lays out the impact of the February 28 military intervention on Islamic political thought. The chapter shows the repercussions of the moderation in Islamic political movement and of the foundation of the AKP as an accommodationist political party, in relation to the conception of the state and democracy, and the deliberations about the Kurdish question which are the permanent themes of the study.

Lastly, in Chapter V I will follow the same pattern for the period between 2008 and 2014 in order to explicate the nature of transformation in Islamic political thought during the AKP rule. The height of the AKP rule signifies the end of the February 28 conditions and marked a new historical setting for the formation of Islamic movement. Thus, this chapter aims to show the impact of the duration of the AKP rule on Muslim intellectuals. Through analyzing the ideas of the same Yeni Zemin contributors on the political system, democracy and the Kurdish question I shed light on discursive shifts in Muslim intellectuals writings as the Islamic segments of the society are integrated into the socio-political system by the AKP and as the party takes root in the state establishment.

CHAPTER II

Framework of the Study

This chapter aims to establish the link between the studies concerning contemporary Islamic movements and the study and presents the conceptual and methodological frameworks. First, I will provide a literature review in the form of a historiographical debate which will help to contextualize my analysis of the writings of Muslim intellectuals in Turkey since the 1990s. The literature review is going to discuss contemporary Islamic political movements throughout the world as well as in Turkey. Then I present the theoretical framework of the thesis. As I discuss the gaps and inadequacies in the existing literature concerning Muslim intellectuals and their role in shaping contemporary Islamic political thought in Turkey, the main problem of the thesis will come out. Finally I lay down the methodological framework which I employ in the rest of the thesis to analyze the conceptions of the state in Muslim intellectuals' writings.

II.I.   Literature Review and Historical Context

In contextualizing the Islamic political thought articulated by Muslim intellectuals, references should not be restricted to grand social transformations such as urbanization, neoliberalism and the end of the Cold War; we need to incorporate the factors affecting political dynamics such as the growing popularity of the RP, the rising Kurdish insurgency as well as the position of other parties and military-bureaucratic elites against the Islamic movement. In order to further explore these topics, in this review I refer to the literature on Islamic socio-political movements.

Although it is not primarily concerned with Muslim intellectuals or Islamist thought per se, the literature on the sociology of Islamism offers a broad vista of the transformation of Islamist thought during and after the 1980's. The review of this literature encompasses studies concerning Islamic movements in other Muslim-populated countries as well as and those that are specific to the Turkish context. The literature on the sociology of Islamism examines the Islamic movements in their continuity and maps out their ideational and operational evolutions and transformations instead of giving a periodic profile.

II.I.I.   Islamic Movement after 1980 from a Comparative Perspective

The comparative studies related to post-1980 Islamic movements emphasize the growing appeal of Islamic political identity among popular masses as a result of massive urbanization and spread of educational institutions. For example, Olivier Roy argues that the growing number of university graduates who were not able to meet their career hopes in the face of deteriorating economic conditions were the main source of personnel for Islamic parties.[30] In the Turkish context, neoliberalism reinforced the problems of rapid urbanization. Neoliberal policies, as Cihan Tuğal puts forth, "coalesced with the existing patronage mechanisms to unduly advantage various elite families" which became the main source of social grievance.[31] The RP managed to address the problems of those who were worse-off by neoliberalism and incorporate them in the Islamic movement via its anti-corruption discourse and redistributive project *Adil Düzen*.

In addition to the mobilization of the educated youth whose encounter with the harsh realities of neoliberal economic policies, the spread of mass communication technologies is another important factor highlighted by the literature. Dale Eickelman argues that mass

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[30] Olivier Roy, *The Failure of Political Islam*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994), 48-49.
[31] Cihan Tuğal, *Passive Revolution: Absorbing the Islamist Challenge to Capitalism*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 41-42.

communication makes an impact on Islamism similar to the way printing press paved the way for the Protestant Reformation. For Eickelman, "authoritative religious discourse, once the monopoly of religious scholars who have mastered recognized religious texts, is replaced by direct and broader access to the printed word".[32] Hence, the mass communication led the emergence of Muslim intellectuals as the masters of the printed word and enabled them to interact with the global intellectual debates as discussed earlier.

As the Islamic political identity gained ground among popular masses during the 1980s and 1990s, Islamic movements ceased to be radical oppositional movements rejecting participation in national politics. According to Mona El-Ghobashy, the Muslim Brothers' political participation brought about the Brotherhood's opting into the political system and its democratization.[33] The first factor that allowed and encouraged the Brotherhood to participate in the elections was Anwar Sadat's moderate approach towards the Muslim Brothers in the early 1980s. Second, the younger generations of the organization pushed the Brotherhood leaders to change their strategy "from politics as a sacred mission to politics as the public contest between rival interests".[34] Thus, the ideal of an Islamic state was given up in favor of a democratic struggle within party politics. El-Ghobashy argues that this organizational moderation was followed by an ideological moderation. Vote maximization strategies pushed the organization to undermine its ideological package and get closer to the center. Moreover, moderate members of the Brotherhood embrace the idea that Islamization of society should be from within the civil

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[32] Dale Eickelman & James Piscatori, *Muslim Politics*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996). 43.

[33] Mona El-Ghobashy, "The Metamorphosis of the Egyptian Muslim Brothers", *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 37, No. 3 (Aug., 2005) 373-395. Another similar study, Sana Abed-Kotob, "The Accommodationists Speak: Goals and Strategies of the Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt", *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 27, No. 3 (Aug., 1995), 321-339.

[34] El-Ghobashy, "The Metamorphosis of the Egyptian Muslim Brothers", 374.

society by reinterpreting the texts of founding father Hasan as el-Banna.[35] In a similar vein, the Ennahda Movement in Tunisia exhibits a more radical shift towards democratization. Esposito and Piscatori obtain that Tunisian Muslims conceive of democracy as a condition of the modern world. Concepts such as democracy, popular sovereignty, and constitutional law become a part of their political thought and discourse during the 1990s.[36]

Thus, the overall argument of comparativist literature on post-1980 Islamic movements is that revolutionary, violent and off-the-grid movements had faded at the end of the 1980s and that within-system movements had gained ground via political struggles in the form of conservative parties during the 1990s. Following this transformation in Islamic movements, Olivier Roy contends that political Islam as a project aiming at establishing an Islamic state has failed. Political Islamic ideology is replaced by a "puritanical, preaching, populist, conservative neo-fundamentalism" advocated by former adherents of political Islam.[37] Islamic movements, in this process, adapted to the rules of the local political game and diverged from the internationalism of political Islamic movements. This perspective is particularly useful in understanding the RP's coalition with nationalist and conservative parties in the 1991 General Elections which estranged some of the Kurdish members of the party like Yeni Zemin author Altan Tan.

The comparativist literature on political Islamic movements admirably delineates the major social and historical factors that molded the post-1980 political Islamic movements. However, this literature does not give us adequate conceptual tools to understand the Islamic political thought in this period due mostly to its indifference to the ideational dimension post-1980 Islamism and the more recent intellectual figures. Asef Bayat's recent work, *Post-Islamism*

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[35] Ibid.
[36] J. Esposito & J. Piscatori, "Democratization and Islam", *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 45, No. 3 (Summer, 1991), 440.
[37] Roy, *The Failure of Political Islam,* 25.

offers a very strong analysis of Islamic political thought since the 1990s and successfully fills the gap in this literature. Bayat argues that the shift from a worldview centered on the ideal of an Islamic state to a worldview that respect political pluralism and democratic rights signifies the emergence of "post-Islamism", both as an historical condition in the Muslim world and as a different socio-political project. According to Bayat, post-Islamism refers to "a complex process of breaking from an Islamist ideological package by adhering to a different, more inclusive, kind of religious project in which Islam nevertheless continues to remain both as faith and as a player in the public sphere".[38] Thus, post-Islamist worldview does not indicate secularization in political Islamic identity in the sense that Islamic principles are still at the core of Islamic political thought. The understanding and interpretation of religious principles are fundamentally different from Islamism. Bayat highlights post-Islamists' emphasis on "rights instead of duties" and "historicity rather than fixed scriptures".[39]

The comparativist literature analyzes the contextual factors affecting the Islamic movements throughout the world such as the rising currency of liberal democracy and neoliberal globalization. These analyses enable us to observe both the impact of these global processes and the local dynamics on the transformation of the Islamic movements. In this sense, the findings of comparativist literature allow us what is peculiar to Turkey and what is common to the Muslim-populated countries in this transformation. Despite the inadequacies mentioned above, the comparativist literature also provides analytical tools to fill the gaps in the literature on political Islam in Turkey. In the following part I will discuss the trajectory of the Islamic movement in Turkey after 1980s in order to elaborate on the local dynamics that have affected the political

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[38] Asef Bayat, "Post-Islamism at Large", in *Post-Islamism: The Changing Faces of Political Islam*, edited by Asef Bayat, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 25-26.
[39] Ibid., 8.

Islamic movement. This discussion will provide the necessary analysis of the religiously-oriented political parties and Muslim intellectuals' relationship with them.

II.I.II.   Transformation of the Political Islamic Movement in Turkey

It is difficult to find the exact equivalents of the above mentioned theses for Islamic movements in Turkey due to latter's *sui generis* political conditions that had allowed religiously oriented political parties to participate in politics since the 1970s. That the state implemented the so called Turkish Islamic Synthesis project and promoted moderate Islamic communities after the 1980 coup d'état further moderated the political environment for Islamic movements in Turkey. Through these policies, the state aspired to obviate the rise of an Islamist revolutionary tendency inspired by the Iranian Revolution and to prevent a popular Kurdish resurgence. Thus, Islamic movements and organizations found a larger space in the 1980s[40] as long as they were not seen as a real threat to the regime.

Nevertheless, mass communication technologies such as radio and television, and the ease with the distribution of print media in an age of globalization enabled political Islamists in Turkey to engage more with Islamic movements abroad. Starting with translations of the works of major Islamist intellectuals such as Sayyid Qutb, Mawdudi and Ali Sheriati, this engagement culminated after the Islamic revolution in Iran. Islamic movements in Turkey which were hitherto indifferent to or ignorant of the problems of other Muslim nations emancipated themselves from the immediately local dynamics.[41] Although the revolutionary tendencies are lost in the 1990s, the Islamic regime in Iran still appeals to Yeni Zemin contributors. Interviews with Iranian politicians and diplomats, advertisements of the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of

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[40] Yavuz, *Islamic Political Identity*.

[41] Ahmet Çiğdem, "İslamcılık ve Türkiye Üzerine Bazı Notlar" " in *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasal Düşünce Vol. 6: İslamcılık*, ed. Yasin Aktay (İstanbul: İletişim, 2006) 26-33.

Iran and Kenan Çamurcu's monthly reports on Iranian politics demonstrate the close interest of the magazine's for Iran. Hence, Muslim intellectuals strictly opposed to the Turkish Islamic Synthesis project as one of its aim was to alienate Turkish Muslims from Iran. This project is fiercely criticized also for the regime's attempt to use Islam as a means to suppress the Kurdish movement.[42]

The thoughts of the Muslim intellectuals under scrutiny here are not necessarily representative of the agenda of the entire political Islamic movement, in particular the RP. Although Muslim intellectuals struggled to influence the party and convince its leaders to transform the RP in line with Muslim intellectuals' worldviews, the RP leadership kept its distance from the demands of Muslim intellectuals during the 1990s. However, a thorough transformation in Islamic political movement happened in the aftermath of the February 28, 1997 military memorandum. Therefore, most of the recent studies about Turkey converge around this incidence. The RP of the 1990s fits well within Olivier Roy's framework with its populist, nationalist and conservative discourse; yet these were all embedded in the discourse of Milli Görüş since the 1970s. Political Islam in Turkey changed its attitude dramatically, when it was confronted with the iron fist of the regime. Following the victory of the RP in the 1995 General Elections, the RP-led coalition was forced to implement policies to reinforce secularism in Turkey with the military memorandum on February 28, 1997. The RP withdrew from the coalition they formed with the True Path Party [Doğru Yol Partisi (DYP)] and soon after the Constitutional Court closed down the party in 1997 by claiming that the party was associated to anti-secular activities of religious organizations.

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[42] Yavuz, *Islamic Political Identity*, 110.

The most radical shift in the discourse of the Virtue Party (Fazilet Partisi [FP]), RP's successor, is observed in the attitude towards the EU. Since the 1970s, Milli Görüş parties have always objected to the Westernization project of Turkey in favor of an authentic national (*milli*)[43] identity and model of civilization. Therefore, Milli Görüş has been the fierce opponent of Turkey's EU accession policy and amicable relations with the US. However, after February 28 process, Milli Görüş brought the Constitutional Court cases against the RP and party leaders to the European Court of Human Rights.[44] According to Fulya Atacan, in addition to the symbolic meaning of this act, the FP stressed democratic values, pluralism and human rights by addressing the EU and the US emphasis for democratization.[45] Thus, the closing down of the RP was interpreted as a violation of democratic rights and the persecution of practicing Muslims from the public spaces was framed into the concept of civil rights and liberties.[46] It is important to note that this transformation in the party's rhetoric is similar to the discourse in Yeni Zemin which revolves around the concepts such as democracy, pluralism and civil society. These Muslim intellectuals provided the party leadership with the ideological support which the political actors had no choice but to accept under the extraordinary circumstances of post-February 28 process.

The younger generations and reformists in the party who were connected to Muslim intellectuals demanded further changes in policies as well as in party structure. First, they challenged the Erbakan backed leader of the party, Recai Kutan. Then following the closing down of the FP, they founded the Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi [AKP]) in 2001. The AKP proclaimed itself as a conservative democratic party and "reject[ed]

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[43] "Milli" is the adjective form of "millet" which refers to a religious group in Islamic sources (e.g. Muslims are a millet). However, nation was also translated as millet in the 19th century. Thus the word milli has a dual meaning which the Milli Görüş utilizes in its ideology. See Tuğal, *Passive Revolution*, p. 5.

[44] İhsan Dağı, "Transformation of Islamic Political Identity in Turkey: Rethinking the West and westernization", *Turkish Studies*, 6:1, (2005), 27.

[45] Fulya Atacan, "Explaining Religious Politics at the Crossroad: AKP-SP", *Turkish Studies*, 6:2 (2005), 188.

[46] Ibid., 193.

any continuity with the 'national outlook' parties".[47] Hale and Özbudun suggests that both in the 2002 and 2007 elections, the party emphasized democratic values, the rule of law, pluralism, respect for diversity and human rights; more importantly they ascertained their respect and adherence to secularism.[48] These post-February 28 transformations within Milli Görüş indicate a correspondence of worldviews between the AKP cadres and Muslim intellectuals. Moreover, almost all the social elements that the AKP managed to consolidate under its banner -namely the urban poor, the provincial bourgeoisie, Kurds and liberals,[49] are those that are frequently referred to as the aspirants of a systemic change in Yeni Zemin. Thus, based on these correspondences which are highlighted by the existing literature as well, the studies suggest that intellectual/ideological sources of the AKP were mostly provided by Muslim intellectuals, including Yeni Zemin contributors such as Ali Bulaç and Mehmet Metiner. More importantly, some Yeni Zemin authors were directly involved in the political campaign of the AKP and became party ideologues.

This transformation was conceptualized in a number of different ways by the scholars of the political Islamic movement in Turkey. Similar to Olivier Roy's comparative analysis, Jenny White argues that Islam ceased to be a political ideology of Muslims. The Islamist ideology is replaced by the "Muslimhood model", as White puts forth, which challenges the secular-Islamist dichotomy posed by Kemalism.[50] Accordingly, the Muslimhood model contends that "religion is personal but … as such, it can be incorporated into the public and political spheres without

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[47] W. Hale & E. Özbudun, *Islamism, Democracy and Liberalism in Turkey: The case of the AKP*, (New York: Routledge, 2010), 20.

[48] Ibid.

[49] See Nuh Yılmaz, "İslamcılık, AKP, Siyaset" " in *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasal Düşünce Vol. 6: İslamcılık*, ed. Yasin Aktay (İstanbul: İletişim, 2006), 604-619; Hakan Yavuz, *Islamic Political Identity*, 258; Hale & Özbudun, *Islamism, Democracy and Liberalism in Turkey*, 36.

[50] Jenny White, "The End of Islamism?: Turkey's Muslimhood Model" in *Remaking Muslim Politics*, ed. Robert W. Hefner (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 88.

compromising the secular state system".[51] Thus, an individualized Islamic identity which does not preclude a Muslim to be an actor within secular politics is embraced by the members of the AKP. In other words, Islamists compromised on their ideological imperatives and halfheartedly surrendered to the Kemalist project for privatization of Islam. Reciprocal compromises of Islamists and the Kemalist elite are the punchline of Berna Turam's analysis as well. Turam challenges the single-sided perspectives in state-Islamism relations and highlights the state-Islam interaction in everyday life on matters such as education and women's role in social life. This interaction intensified especially after 1980 and "[a]fter two decades of experimenting with the politics of engagement, at the turn of the millennium Islamic social forces and the Turkish state came to a partial agreement".[52] The engagement resulted in moderate Islamists' "partial agreement" on the principles of the secular republic.

On the other hand, İhsan Dağı, following Bayat's post-Islamism framework, argues that the new political stance of the reformists of the RP reflects a new worldview which embraces the discourse of democracy and human rights. The quest for legitimacy and recognition in a secularist environment pushed Islamist towards this process. For Dağı "the emergence of Turkish post-Islamism was thus triggered, as in the other cases of post-Islamism, by the crisis of Islamism, a crisis that occurred at a time when Islamism was at its strongest stage, in the late 1990s. … Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi has been both an agent of this transformation and its embodiment".[53] Accordingly, though initially pragmatic and strategic, reformist Islamist politicians have "adapted" their Islamic worldview to the discourse of democracy and human rights since the 1990s. Nevertheless, Cihan Tuğal argues that the transformation within Islamic

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[51] Ibid.

[52] Berna Turam, *Between Islam and the State: The Politics of Engagement*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), 136.

[53] İhsan Dağı, "Post-Islamism *à la Turca*", in *Post-Islamism: The Changing Faces of Political Islam*, edited by Asef Bayat, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 101-102.

movement is not democratization, rationalization, adaptation or a healthy evolution. Rather, moderate Islam refers to "the mobilization of broad sectors under the banner of radicalizing Islam, the subsequent defeat of radicalism, and the radicals' strategic (yet internalized) change of track after the defeat".[54] Borrowing from Gramsci, Tuğal explains this process as the constitution of hegemony, the absorption of Islamist radicalism into the neoliberal/capitalist system. Seen from this perspective, the ideational aspect of Islamic movement underwent a major transformation that eradicated anti-systemic notions in their political thought.

Thus, the operational transformation of the political Islamic movement is represented as a pro-system evolution. However, this transformation may not necessarily lead Islamic segments of the society to embrace democratic values, pluralism and tolerance. Murat Tezcür's thoughtful critique of moderation theory suggests that the evolution of Islamists in regimes that are not fully fledged democracies is not "conducive to democratization".[55] Tezcür further argues that ideological moderation did not simply follow the moderation in the strategies of the political Islamic movement in Turkey. According to him, "the expansion of a pluralistic public sphere that spurred debates among Islamists and disagreements between Islamists and other political groups enabled ideological change and contributed to the emergence of Muslim reformers. Institutional incentives reinforced and accelerated, but did not cause, ideological moderation".[56] Thus, he maintains that the ideological moderation of Islamism already existed and enabled a smooth transformation within the political Islamic movement. In so doing, Tezcür underscores the role of Muslim intellectuals in the transition from the RP to the AKP.

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[54] Cihan Tuğal, *Passive Revolution*, 3.
[55] Güneş Murat Tezcür, "The Moderation Theory Revisited: The Case of Islamic Political Actors" *Party Politics*, Vol. 16, No.1 (2010), 70.
[56] Murat Tezcür, *Muslim Reformers in Iran and Turkey*, 15-16.

Consequently, the scholars of political Islam in Turkey agree that the movement has undergone a transformation in terms of a fusion of the Islamic political movement and other Islamic segments of the society with the socio-political system of Turkey. This transition from radical opposition to the system to partial acceptance of the rules of the political game in Turkey is widely conceptualized as a political moderation. However, the literature does not reach a consensus on what this political moderation refers to in terms of its impact on the Islamic political attitude. Thus, it is a matter of debate that whether this pro-system transformation refers to liberalization and democratization of political Islamic movement in Turkey or it only allows the movement to integrate to the political system which is not arguably a fully-functioning democracy.

Moreover, the literature also highlights the important role of Muslim intellectuals in this transformation. Both for White and Tezcür, Muslim intellectuals who have engaged in public debates on democracy and pluralism paved the way for the behavioral moderation in political Islamic movement in Turkey by pointing out the compatibility of the Islamic worldview with democratic politics. However, the scholars do not demonstrate why and how Muslim intellectuals articulated democracy and pluralism in their debates in the 1990s, at a time when they were at odds with the political system. A former reformist RP member, Bahri Zengin, is a case in point. Although Zengin was an exponent of a democratic/pluralistic understanding of Islam in Yeni Zemin, he did not join the AKP. Fulya Atacan reports that Zengin expresses his distaste with the moderate attitude of the AKP:

> These powers [the military, the media and the big industrialists] determine politics but our mission is not to follow them but to establish a new civilization. As you know the establishment put pressure on the opposition. What do they do? They ignore you, or they identify you as fanatical and try to obstruct your development, or they accuse you, or

they even threaten you. What are you going to do? Are you going to follow your cause or are you going to subordinate yourself to them? They preferred the second and they used different arguments in order to justify their obedience.[57]

He believes that the pro-system transformation in the AKP indicates the party's subordination to the military, the media and the big industrialists, in short to the system. While Zengin advocates a democratic regime and a pluralistic civil society, he does not abandon the ideal to achieve an alternative civilization project based on his Islamic identity. Thus, although the scholars highlight the role of intellectuals in the moderation process, they do not refer to the conflicts among the intellectuals as well as the ideologues of the Islamic political movement.

The case of Bahri Zengin suggests the inadequacies of climbing on the bandwagon of explaining the ideological shift in Islamism in the 1990s as moderation process as well as designating the accommodationist stance of the AKP in continuity with this shift. Following Tezcür's line of argument, for example it is rather obscure why Zengin and like-minded Yeni Zemin authors criticize the AKP even though the party leaders feature individual piety and advocate the compatibility of Islam and democracy. As Zengin strictly opposes moderate political stance of actors with Islamic identity while he demonstrates the post-Islamist credentials especially in his writings in Yeni Zemin, his example also suggests that a student of contemporary Islamic movement in Turkey should pay attention to the distinction Bayat makes between post-Islamism and moderate Islam. Moreover, Zengin's case indicates that the inadequacies in the existing scholarship also stem from the overall ignorance about the significance of the party affiliation, official or unofficial, among the intellectuals and ideologues of the Islamic movement.

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[57] Atacan, "Politics at Crossroads", 194.

II.II.   Theoretical Framework

The thesis will demonstrate the ideological trajectory of the Islamic intelligentsia in Turkey since the 1990s in relation to the engagement between the state establishment and the Islamic political movement. Hence, my primary question is whether the behavioral moderation in political Islamic movement is accompanied by a change in Islamic political thought. I try to answer this question through an analysis of Muslim intellectuals' relations with the state and the political Islamic movement at the discursive level. In other words, I trace the discursive shifts in Islamic political thought in Turkey since the 1990s on the basis of Muslim intellectuals' ideological stance vis-à-vis the state. This study offers an approach to the transformation of political Islam in Turkey at the turn of the millennium from the perspective of moderation theory.[58] Therefore, in evaluating the trajectory of political Islamic thought I rely on the implications of this theoretical framework.

Moderation theory suggests that under the threat of the political system which endangers the survival of the organization and in pursuit of vote-maximization, a radical opposition party agrees to the terms of participation in democratic politics by gradually dropping its radical attitude.[59] The opposition group takes a moderate and accommodationist position vis-à-vis the current political system to the extent that adhering the "the rules of the game" ensures the survival of the group and brings about political gains. According to Tezcür, the theory holds that "[e]lectoral concerns and fear of state repression check their radical tendencies. Revolutionaries become moderates not as a result of ideological metamorphosis or civic learning but because of strategic interests. Their beliefs are not thought to have any significant influence on their

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[58] The theory was originally developed to analyze socialist and catholic political parties in the Western European democracies drawing mainly on the works of Robert Michels, Giovanni Sartori, Joseph Schumpeter and other prominent scholars of party politics and political ideologies.
[59] Jillian Schwedler, *Faith in Moderation: Islamist Parties in Jordan and Yemen*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 11-12.

behaviors. Consequently, democratic systems were consolidated even in the absence of committed democrats".[60] Thus, the process is a win-win negotiation between an opposition group and the political system. On the one hand, the group secures its survival and obtains an opportunity to achieve political power. On the other hand, democratic processes are guaranteed with the elimination of a radical opposition to the system.

Although radicals adopt an accommodationist approach due to pragmatic reasons, moderation theory assumes that an ideological moderation is going to follow the behavioral moderation. The inclusion of the ex-radicals to the political system undermines the anti-systemic ideas and attitudes among the radical intelligentsia. The inclusion further legitimizes participation into democratic process and culminates in the adoption of a more democratic, tolerant and pluralistic worldview.[61] Thus, ideological and behavioral moderation reinforce each other in this process. Tezcür challenges the temporal precedence of behavioral moderation over ideological moderation for three reasons: first, without an ideological ground or an already existing ideological moderation, the political actors may fail to justify their participation into democratic politics. Second, ideological moderation can occur as a result of country-specific historical factors such as "the expansion of a pluralistic sphere that spurred debates among Islamists" in Turkey. Third, an ideological moderation can also occur even in the absence of incentives from an authoritarian political system as in most Middle Eastern countries.[62]

Tezcür further criticizes the moderation theory for it assumes the consolidation of a democratic system as the radical opposition takes an accommodationist stance. The theory is formulated for fully-functioning liberal democracies where political pluralism is taken for

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[60] Tezcür, *Muslim Reformers in Iran and Turkey*, 31.
[61] Schwedler, *Faith in Moderation*, 3.
[62] Tezcür, *Muslim Reformers*, 14-16.

granted. However, Tezcür suggests that in a partly-consolidated democracy like in Turkey or in a semi-autocratic regime like in Iran, "the rise of groups demonstrating the compatibility of Islamic values and democratic commitments did not necessarily generate democratic transition".[63] Although Muslim reformers in both countries underscore the compatibility of Islam with democratic values, political pluralism and human rights, they may not be able to act in accordance with their moderate worldview when they achieve political power. According to Tezcür, "[o]nce organized as a vote-maximizing party replicating hierarchical tendencies in other centre–right parties [in Turkey], the leadership [of the AKP] lost the opportunity to build more democratic forms of representation".[64] Thus, the existing defects of the political systems in fully-fledged operationalization of democratic values, political pluralism and human rights hamper the consolidation of democratic system notwithstanding the moderate strategies of the ex-radicals.

Based on Tezcür's insightful critique of the moderation theory, I argue that moderation should be distinguished from accommodation. The latter should be defined as a *relative* category by taking account of the trajectory of the political system in a given country. Moderation of a radical opposition groups is not straightforwardly conducive to democratization. Rather, the process leads to consolidation of the political system. Thus, defining moderation as "a shift toward a substantive commitment to democratic principles, including the peaceful alternation of power, ideological and political pluralism, and citizenship rights"[65] while taking it for granted that the inclusion of moderate politicians and ideologues to the political system undermines their anti-systemic ideas and attitudes offers a uniform understanding of ideological moderation. When the behavioral moderation is associated with adopting accommodationist and centrist strategies,

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[63] Tezcür, "The Moderation Theory Revisited", 71.
[64] Ibid., 82.
[65] Carrie Rosefsky Wickham, "The Path to Moderation: Strategy and Learning in the Formation of Egypt's Wasat Party", *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 36, No. 2 (Jan., 2004), 206.

this understanding of ideological moderation assumes the existence of a functioning democratic system. However, a relative understanding of moderation helps better make sense of the transformation of the political actors in opposition groups as well as the group's ideologues. Therefore, during the process of moderation, i.e. from a radical opposition to the system to embracing an accommodationist strategy, it is essential to analyze on which grounds political actors and ideologues articulate their criticisms to the political system and how these articulations change in different historical and political contexts. In other words, how ideological discourses are formulated at different times by an opposition movement allows one to unpack the process of moderation in an adequate way. It is for this reason that this study aims to shed light on different discourses of Muslim intellectuals in different political settings in Turkey.

Scholars of moderation (within Islamic movements) usually underestimate the role of intellectuals in the moderation process. Rather, they discuss at length the ideological moderation through an analysis of discursive shifts in political actors' statements with an emphasis on the impact of the political context. In this regard Carrie Rosefsky Wickham explains three causes of ideological moderation during the formation Egypt's *Wasat* Party as follows:

> First, Islamist ideological moderation was driven in part by strategic calculation but was also a result of political learning, that is, of change in its leaders' core values and beliefs. Second, value change was facilitated by the interaction of Islamists and secular opposition leaders in pursuit of common goals, including reform of Egypt's authoritarian state. Third, the institutional opportunities and incentives for such interaction were created by a mix of regime accommodation and repression of the country's Islamist opposition groups.[66]

Arguing with references to the opportunity structures, networks and constraints imposed by the political system, Wickham does not attribute a significant role to Muslim intellectuals. Although she refers to a generation of Islamist intellectuals with liberal interpretations of Islam who

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[66] Wickham, "Path to Moderation", 207.

influenced the formation of the *Wasat* Party, she does not elaborate how these intellectuals articulate their liberal Islamic worldview in *Wasat*'s political campaign. According to her, the influence of liberal Islamist intellectuals cannot explain ideological moderation due to their marginal position in the Egyptian context.[67]

Concerning Turkey, however, there are significant factors calling for a re-consideration of the role of Muslim intellectuals in moderation of political Islamic movement. First, the liberal interpretations of Islam have become prevalent and influential among Muslim intellectuals in Turkey in the early 1990s. Fitting well in with the post-Islamism framework of Asef Bayat, Muslim intellectuals in Turkey have become advocates of democratization, pluralistic civil society and individual rights and liberties. Nonetheless, Bayat is cautious for defining post-Islamization as a process of moderation or equate post-Islamism with liberal Islam. For him, "the term *moderation* …would be unable to ascertain the dynamics and direction of change. As such, it signifies the degree (rather than kind) of departure from 'radicalism' and thus remains highly relative".[68] Thus, that Muslim intellectuals in Turkey adopt certain tenets of liberal democracy does not necessarily refer to an ideological moderation. Moderation with its implications is a relative concept as I argued and this, according to Bayat, cannot adequately explain Islamic political thought in Turkey in the 1990s. Rather, I suggest defining ideological moderation as a process within which the intellectuals and ideologues shift from a radical critique of the socio-political system to advocacy of reforming or even restoring the existing system.

Second, Muslim intellectuals successfully influenced both the general public and the reformist Islamist politicians to a great extent, as suggested in the previous chapter. Muslim

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[67] Ibid., p. 211.
[68] Asef Bayat, "Post-Islamism at Large", 27.

intellectuals are a significant factor in terms of understanding the Islamic movement in Turkey and the transformation of Islamic politics in the late 1990s and 2000s mainly for two reasons. First, as Sena Karasipahi points out, Muslim intellectuals are public intellectuals in the sense that their opinions both reflect the concerns of a broader Islamic segment of the society and have great appeal among masses with Islamic identity.[69] Second, the influence of Muslim intellectuals on the actors of Islamic political movement has increased tremendously in the 1990s, as Muslim intellectuals gained visibility and significance in the public sphere in Turkey.[70] They were within the network of reformist Islamist politicians and had the opportunity to influence these politicians' worldviews and political strategies.[71]

This study conceptualizes Muslim intellectuals based on these two points: Muslim intellectuals are public intellectuals and they have a profound impact on the constitution (and re-constitution) of Islamic political ideology in Turkey. One important implication of this conceptualization is that Muslim intellectuals are bound to the interests of Islamic segments of the society that they appeal to, if not represent forthrightly. Thus, this study draws on a theoretical framework that designates intellectuals as a social group that bound to their social origins and the social networks within which they take part. According to Robert Brym, an exponent of this theoretical framework, "to explain intellectuals' ideologies and political allegiances, one must trace their paths of social mobility as they are shaped by the capacity of classes, ethnic groups, religious orders, and other social collectivities to expand the institutional

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[69] Karasipahi, *Muslims in Modern Turkey*, 65.

[70] Tezcür, *Muslim Reformers*, 18.

[71] Mehmet Metiner, Ali Bulaç and Abdurrahman Dilipak depict their relations and encounters with Islamist politicians and bureaucrats in their columns and memoires. See for instance, Mehmet Metiner, *Yemyeşil Şeriat Bembeyaz Demokrasi*, (Istanbul: Doğan Kitap, 2004), Chapters 5-6-7.

milieus through which intellectuals pass".[72] Brym's approach is useful for it enables comprehending Muslim intellectuals' social positions as well as their political and institutional affiliations in relation to their ideological stances. It suggests that these positions change in relation to (I) the position of the Islamic segments of the society which do not qualify as a social class in the conventional sense but constitute a social collectivity with a cohesive socio-political identity; and (II) the position of the political organization or institution to which intellectuals are attached. Hence, in this study, I refer to different positions of the Islamic segments of the society vis-à-vis the state and the political system in Turkey as well as the intellectuals' relations with the Islamic political movement to account for changes in Muslim intellectuals' ideologies and political allegiances.

II.III.   The Problem

As previous parts suggest, it is important to contextualize democracy debates among Muslim intellectuals in order to understand the dynamics of moderation within the Islamic movement. In which political, social and intellectual context do Muslim intellectuals engage in debates on democracy in the 1990s? How do they conceptualize democracy? What are the role and functions of democracy and civil society in their critical engagement with the state? How do they respond to the moderate political attitude of the AKP? How does their critical engagement with the state evolve through the February 28 process and the period of subsequent AKP governments? I believe answering these questions will enable us to highlight divergences in the literature concerning the meaning of Islamic moderation. Furthermore, an analysis of Muslim

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[72] Robert Brym, "Intellectuals, Sociology of", in *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences*, 2nd edition, Vol. 12, (2015), 279, accessed http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-08-097086-8.32078-5

intellectuals based on these questions will demonstrate the nature of the interplay between Muslim intellectuals, the political Islamic movement and the state machinery in Turkey.

This thesis argues that Muslim intellectuals articulated concepts such as democratization, pluralism and civil society in the 1990s as part of their critique of the state establishment in Turkey. In other words, Muslim intellectuals' demands for democratization and pluralism and engagements with debates on civil society do not indicate a desire to be integrated to the existing socio-political system. Rather, these concepts were the instruments of Muslim intellectuals, cooperating with liberal and libertarian intellectuals in their challenge to the system, to legitimize their quest for an alternative socio-political system in which the Islamic segments of the society have the opportunity to exist without compromising their Islamic identity. Thus, their embracement of democratic concepts and values do not necessarily signify a new set of ideological commitments. Although moderation of the Islamic political movement utilized these concepts articulated by Muslim intellectuals, the political movement undermined the anti-systemic notions that give meaning to these concepts. In this context, the pragmatic embracement of democratic concepts and values as well as the AKP's exercise of power reveal new lines of division among Muslim intellectuals. Eventually, most Muslim intellectuals acquiesced in the moderate political movement which conduced towards the erosion of anti-systemic tendencies in their discourse, whereas a few intellectuals maintained their critique of the existing system and collided with the Islamic political movement and their fellows in Yeni Zemin. As the subsequent AKP governments allow Islamic segments of the society to integrate to the existing system and as the AKP takes root in the state machinery, Muslim intellectuals' fierce critique of the state has mostly vanished.

My primary aim in this thesis is to contextualize Muslim intellectuals' critique of the state through debates on democracy, pluralism and civil society. I chose to focus on Yeni Zemin for the magazine was a platform of vibrant discussions about democracy and democratization within the Islamic movement in Turkey. In this sense, the magazine is representative for Turkish (post) Islamism of the 1990s. Moreover, Yeni Zemin is not an ordinary case among Islamic magazines of the 1990s. Although it was published for only a very short period, Yeni Zemin brought together some of the key figures of Islamic intelligentsia in Turkey. In retrospect, most of the authors lead Islamic politics of today from different points of view and different political positions.

For the analysis of Muslim intellectuals from this perspective I will only rely on their writings. In so doing, I will pay specific attention to which social segments Muslim intellectuals claim to be representing. I will ask how Muslim intellectuals conceive of their positions within the society and vis-à-vis the state in relation to the position of those social segments. Thus, I will try to account for shifts in Muslim intellectuals' discourses through interpreting the position of Islamic segments of the society within the political system in Turkey. As such, an analysis of Muslim intellectuals from this perspective enriches the literature of Islamic moderation in Turkey by extending the discussion of the process of ideological moderation and its outcomes. This analysis, on the one hand, will demonstrate the ideological commitments of Islamists which are restricted mostly to the statements of political actors in the current literature. On the other hand, it offers a perspective into the outcomes of moderation within political Islam in Turkey among broader Islamic segments of the society.

II.IV.   Notes on Methodology

As stated above, I conceptualize Muslim intellectuals as a social group which expresses their Islamic identity through intellectual activity. First, it is essential to explain what is meant by Islamic identity as well as concepts such as Islam, Islamism and Islamic movement in order to clarify my methodological approach. According to Hakan Yavuz, Islamic (political) identity refers to "the process of becoming conscious of the social and political effects of religiously molded frames of reference, and utilizing these frames as political means for fulfilling worldly agendas".[73] Islamic identity provides principles for the field of social and political actions derived from the Islamic sources. Nevertheless, this process depends on the ways individuals make sense of Islamic doctrines which are shaped by complex social and cultural factors. This study concerns the implications of these ways of understanding Islamic principles in terms of Muslim intellectuals' political thought. Moreover, Islamism can be defined as an ideology derived from a particular understanding of Islam. In other words, it is a modern political ideology constructed around the Islamic identity. On the other hand, an Islamic movement is a collectivity of activist social groups and organizations inspired by Islamic religious identity.[74] When I refer to political parties driven by an Islamic identity in Turkey, I use Islamic *political* movement in order to distinguish other groups and organizations which do not directly engage in politics.

Thus, Islam, defined as a religion or a belief system, should be distinguished from Islamism and Islamic movement. I will not engage in a hermeneutical reading of Islamic sources. I do not discuss the plausibility of Muslim intellectuals' interpretation of Islamic sources. Nor do I assess the compatibility of their ideas to the original Islamic doctrines. I analyze how Muslim

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[73] Yavuz, *Islamic Political Identity*, 6.
[74] Asef Bayat, "Islamism and Social Movement" *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 26, No. 6, (2005), 893.

intellectuals contribute to a modern political ideology which originates from their understanding(s) of Islam. Islam is significant only to the extent that it shapes discourses of Muslim intellectuals as well as the ideological/political orientation of Islamic segments of the society. Therefore, I seldom demonstrate Muslim intellectuals' articulation of Islamic identity and their references to the Islamic sources in their political discussions. Rather, I mainly focus on the ideas and formations of discourses in the writings of Muslim intellectuals.

The analysis of Muslim intellectuals' writings requires a "balance between contextual and substantive content-based analysis".[75] Therefore, before I started writing the thesis, I conducted a preliminary research about the contextual factors such as globalization, postmodernism, neoliberalism, the rise of the Islamic movement and the RP and moderation of the Islamic movement and the AKP. However, I do not prefer presenting long historiographical debates in each chapter. Instead, I give brief information about the historical context for each period in the beginning of the chapters. I utilize contextual factors in the analytical parts where I interpret ideas and discourses. In relation to this, second, I do a content analysis of the writings in Yeni Zemin and later writings of major Yeni Zemin authors. The content-based analysis comprises of mapping out overlapping and conflicting patterns of thought and recurring themes in the authors' writings as well as analysis of discursive shifts over different periods. These two are evidently connected in the sense that the content analysis will be in the light of my reading of the historical context.

The complete analysis of Muslim intellectuals' writings constitutes the framework of this thesis. Therefore, I focus directly on the writings and thoughts of Muslim intellectuals. Unlike the

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[75] Abdulkader Tayob, "Making Sense of Modern Muslim Intellectual History", *Die Welt des Islams*, 47: 3-4, (2007), 257.

literature on Muslim intellectuals I discussed in the first part of the literature review, my point of origin is not the intellectuals per se, but their ideas, patterns of thought and discourses. I suggest a "turn toward what we might call the ideational history of the social, an examination of the conceptual underpinnings of the social order".[76] Thus, I rely on sources written by Muslim intellectuals addressing to the general public. I do not directly engage in a discussion of social networks they established with Islamic NGOs, communities, political actors or other Muslim intellectuals through using different sources such as interviews.

In order to shed light on the transformation of Islamic political thought expressed in the writings of Muslim intellectuals, I divided my research into three distinct periods. First, I analyze the Islamic political thought in the mid-1990s. After my preliminary research, I decided to focus on Yeni Zemin for several reasons. First, as mentioned before, Yeni Zemin is a precious source in terms of the intellectual diversity of its authors. In addition to its potential to reveal the complexity of Islamist political thought, this diversity justifies my selection of the magazine as a representative voice of Islamism in Turkey. Although Yeni Zemin authors share some similar tendencies and common points, their arguments often diverge when they do not collide. Second, in retrospect, Yeni Zemin hosts Muslim intellectuals who are in different yet important positions, reflecting different political allegiances and ideological orientations in today's Turkey. These include the AKP ideologues Yalçın Akdoğan and Mehmet Metiner; Altan Tan who is in the Kurdish political movement while holding his Islamist credentials; and Ali Bulaç, one of the most of prolific Islamist author in Turkey, who is close to the Gülen community. Last but not least, Yeni Zemin is a magazine in which Muslim intellectuals carried out their debates on democracy,

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[76] Daniel Wickeberg, "Intellectual History vs. the Social History of Intellectuals", *Rethinking History* 5:3 (2001), 393.

pluralism and civil society. Thus, Yeni Zemin offers examples of exponents of a moderate Islamic ideology Güneş Murat Tezcür points out.

After the analysis of Yeni Zemin I trace the intellectual trajectories of major Yeni Zemin authors in the aftermath of the February 28 military intervention. February 28 is presented by the literature as a watershed for the Islamic movement in Turkey. The literature points out to this process as the eventual start of behavioral moderation in Islamic political movement. This process culminated with the establishment of the AKP as indicated above. Therefore, I focus on the aftermath of February 28 from 1998 to 2004 to include the first years of the AKP rule in the analysis. To demonstrate the transformation in Islamic political thought I chose to scrutinize the most prolific authors and paid attention to include those who have distinctly different patterns of thought in themes I investigate in this thesis. This analysis is based on the writings of Mehmet Metiner, Ali Bulaç, Altan Tan, Ümit Aktaş, Davut Dursun, Yalçın Akdoğan, Rasim Özdenören and Abdurrahman Dilipak. For this, I rely on different forms of written sources from books to newspaper columns. The type of source varies for different authors since not all these intellectuals published a book in this period.

Finally, I trace the trajectories of the same intellectuals[77] from 2008 to 2014. As will be discussed later, it is in this period that the AKP consolidated its power and emerged as the most powerful actor in the political system in Turkey. Therefore, the analysis of this period enables me to observe the major outcomes of moderation in the Islamic political movement in Turkey. I employ the same methodology to trace discursive shifts as well as changing and persisting ideas. However, I mostly rely on newspaper columns and magazine articles in this period due to lack of

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[77] Except Davut Dursun. After Dursun was appointed as a member of RTÜK in 2005, he quit writing in the daily *Yeni Şafak*.

other types of written material by the Muslim intellectuals subject to my analysis. Since newspapers provide the only source for this part of the thesis I mainly discuss the articulation of Muslim intellectuals' ideas in topics concerning day-to-day politics in Turkey.

The periodization of the process since the 1990s within which Islamic movement in Turkey has been transforming could be different depending on the purpose of the researcher. My preliminary research suggest that mid-1990s, the aftermath of February 28 and the period after 2008 offer clearly distinguishable positions of the Islamic segments as well as discourses of Muslim intellectuals. In order to trace transformations and discursive shifts better and more explicitly I chose to proceed in my research with time gaps between these three periods. In this way, I offer three *episodes* of Islamic political thought in Turkey since the 1990s. It is also possible to detect changes and shifts within especially the latter two episodes. However, for the main purpose of this thesis, I provide a general contextual framework for each episode in relation to the main contextual factors which rely on in my periodization.

CHAPTER III

Yeni Zemin

> The World is rapidly changing. A new world is being founded in front of us; though full of uncertainties and disorder for now. The massive change the world is undergoing deeply shocks Turkey, driving it to a period of change. Everybody acknowledges that the system implemented in Turkey for seventy years is now in a dead end. The new circumstances in the Caucasus, Central Asia, the Middle East and the Balkans force the Republic of Turkey to make peace with its history, i.e. Islam [*Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Devleti'ni yeniden tarihsel geçmişiyle, yani İslam'la barışmak zorunda bırakıyor*]. In this historic moment, social, cultural and political conditions call for a reconstruction. Turkey is facing the necessity of a wholesale change. Hence, Yeni Zemin is published to fulfill a historical mission in Turkey and aware of the responsibility it undertakes.[78]

Nothing can better summarize the context which Yeni Zemin addresses itself to than this quotation from the first editorial of the magazine. The dominant discourse in the magazine is that of the "change".[79] The "discourse of change" foremost refers to the collapse of the Soviet Union and the global maelstrom that followed this world-historical event. Emerging problems in the Middle East, Caucasus and Central Asia as well as the war in Yugoslavia on top of the Iranian revolution and Afghani resistance are all interpreted as signs of a global change. Turkey, however, is said to be lagging behind in adjusting itself to the "new order of things". Its political system, namely the state itself according to the magazine which uses both notions interchangeably[80], is incapable of both responding to the historical processes and keep pace with

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[78] Editorial, *Yeni Zemin*, Vol. 1, (January, 1993), 1.

[79] Burak Özçetin, "Making of New Islamism in Turkey", 211.

[80] The term "system" usually refers to the "state" in Yeni Zemin and in the later writings of Yeni Zemin authors. The "system" defines mostly the Kemalist state establishment and has nothing to do with capitalism or neoliberalism. I

the social transformation. Therefore, Yeni Zemin calls for a wholesale change in the state establishment in Turkey.

Although the state has always been the most central object of Islamic political thought since the 19th century, what makes Yeni Zemin unique is that the authors do not discuss the ways to Islamize the state establishment and they relinquish the ideal to found an Islamic state. Various proponents of Islamism divide the history of Islamic political thought into three, based on Islamists' approach to the notion of the state. According to Ali Bulaç's classification,[81] the first generation of Islamists in the late 19th and early 20th centuries concerned themselves with the survival of the Ottoman Empire with the sultan-caliph representing the union of all Muslims in the world. The second generation was a product of colonial experiences or Westernist-modernist governments in the Muslim populated countries. Their main endeavour was "to establish an Islamic state" through capturing the state with revolutionary means, and apply the sharia. Unlike these earlier generations, the state is not conceived by the Islamists of the 1990s to be the instrument through which Islamists assert their Islamic worldview to the society. Instead, the very notion of state is the main object of Islamist critique in Yeni Zemin. In this sense and in parallel to the post-Islamism framework of Asef Bayat, the magazine represents a point of departure within Islamic political thought from a state-centric worldview to a hegemonic discourse aiming focused on the civil society.

The intellectual departure in the 1990s which is best exemplified in Yeni Zemin is usually conceptualized as an ideological moderation or as a process whereby Islamists consent to the

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will follow their terminology and mean the working of state establishment when I used the phrase, "political system".As such, "Yeni Zemin authors' attitude towards the system" does not encompass the authors' deliberations about the social formation in Turkey.

[81] Ali Bulaç, "İslam'ın Üç Siyaset Tarzı veya İslamcıların Üç Nesli", in *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasal Düşünce Vol. 6: İslamcılık*, ed. Yasin Aktay (İstanbul: İletişim, 2006), 48-67.

secular political system. Yet, I will argue in this chapter that the unique discourses of Yeni Zemin authors do not, in fact, point to a moderate attitude towards the political system in Turkey. Rather, as Bayat explains, "Islamists become aware of their [uncompromising revolutionary] discourse's anomalies and inadequacies as they attempt to institutionalize or imagine their rule".[82] This shift in Islamist mentality is very well reflected in the first article of the editor Mehmet Metiner:

> To be honest, the Islamic movement has tried to survive as merely an idealistic movement. For this reason, it drifted apart from the reality. The Islamic movement is disconnected from life as it failed to provide solutions to the factual problems. … [The Islamic movement], in order not to fall into unfavorable situations [*olumsuzluklara düşmemek adına*], must embrace the change by getting rid of being apart from the reality and must take its part in the period of change as the most instrumental 'intervening force'. It [Islamic movement] must promote the formation of a libertarian and tolerant environment free of pressure, taboo and fear.[83]

Metiner does not call for a moderation of the Islamist critique of the political system; he envisions a renovation of the Islamist critique with novel concepts and strategies in accordance with the historical changes both in Turkey and throughout the globe.

In line with the (post) Islamist project of Yeni Zemin authors, i.e. establishing an Islamic hegemony over civil society and achieve a dominant role for this Islamic civil society in the socio-political system in Turkey, the authors adjust their critique of the state establishment which they see as the major obstacle in front of their ideal. That Muslim intellectuals incorporate concepts such as democracy, individual rights and liberties, pluralism and demilitarization in their critique of the state does not indicate a desire to take part in the current political system in Turkey. Instead, the magazine considers a wholesale change in the state establishment as a pre-condition for healthy political participation and the conception of permanent solutions to the ills

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[82] Asef Bayat, "Post-Islamism at Large", 8.
[83] Mehmet Metiner, "İslami hareket ve değişim", *Yeni Zemin*, Vol. 1, (January, 1993), 4.

of the country. This chapter will demonstrate this radical critique of the state in Yeni Zemin as well as their suggestions for the necessary political changes in Turkey. In addition to the authors' conceptions of the state, I will discuss the debates in Yeni Zemin concerning the problems of democracy in Turkey and the Kurdish question to elaborate on the Islamist critique of the political system.

III.I.   The Political System and the State

Despite the diversity of their political and ideological orientation, Yeni Zemin authors share a particular conception of the state, based on similar underlying assumptions and principles. In Yeni Zemin, almost all the authors emphasize that the *raison d'être* of the state is to ensure the good of individuals and society. In the very first article of the first volume, the state is defined as an outcome of the contracts among individuals who desire to live together. The article maintains that "the state exists for the rights and security of all the individuals of different religions, believes, nations and sects. …the state is a device, deriving from the contracts of all the individuals living in the society".[84] In a similar vein, for Abdurrahman Dilipak

> The state is the political, military, economic and legal structure that is constituted by the people living in a certain territory who want to protect and improve their rights; to secure their lives, properties and religious liberties; and to carry out tasks that they are incapable of accomplishing, individually or communally. By this definition, the basis of state's existence and legitimacy is protecting fundamental human rights and liberties.[85]

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[84] "Türkiye'nin 70 yıllık politikası: Değişmeden İlerlemek", *Yeni Zemin*, Vol. 1, (January, 1993), 12. The article is the first in the series of articles regarding the cover subject and signed as Yeni Zemin. Later in 2004 Mehmet Metiner declares that the articles in penned by himself. See Mehmet Metiner, *Yemyeşil Şeriat Bembeyaz Demokrasi*, 448.
[85] Abdurrahman Dilipak, "Türkiye'de hiçbir zaman laiklik olmadı", *Yeni Zemin*, Vol. 2. (February, 1993), 17.

Accordingly the state is comprised of individuals and its legitimacy is derived from its ability to respond to individuals' demands. This particular conception of the state these definitions point out indicates the inspiration of social contract theories for Yeni Zemin authors.

Moreover, Yeni Zemin authors prefer offering a meta-definition for the state which does not distinguish different types of states such as democratic states, Liberal states, Communist states or Islamic states. It is by no means to suggest that the idea of an Islamic state is rejected in Yeni Zemin. Most of the authors agree that Islam either offers the basic principles that a state must hold or provides a general framework for the working of state machinery. However, the principles of an Islamic government such as justice (*adalet*), consultancy (*meşveret*) and consent (*biat* or *beyat*), evidently, do not qualify to distinguish "Islamic state" as an essentially different concept since they are not incorporated into most state definitions. In other words, despite the existence of a sense of Islamic state among Yeni Zemin authors, they do not suggest that Islamic sources offer a fix theory of state. Instead of drawing their conceptions of state solely from Islamic sources, Yeni Zemin authors often embrace social contract theories which is interestingly a commonly-held theory in the Western liberal thought.

The liberal approach dominant in definitions of the state is even more salient in the debates on the responsibilities, functions and boundaries of the state. In Yeni Zemin, the state is legitimate to the extent that it fulfills the basic common needs of people which they cannot cover individually. For the authors the state is only an apparatus for the common good. According to Rasim Özdenören, the state serves for the good of individuals and its responsibilities should be limited to the provision of public security, defense, justice and social security.[86] The rest must be

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[86] Rasim Özdenören, "Yabancı sermayeden korkulmamalı", *Yeni Zemin*, Vol. 8, (August, 1993), 16.

left to the civil society which is defined in opposition to the state by Yeni Zemin authors. Addressing the need to re-organize the state's approach to religious affairs it is stated that

> the state has to keep its hands off religion and religion has to be autonomous. For this, the DİB [*Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı (the Directorate of Religious Affairs)*] has to be gradually abolished; the state has to stop TV shows about the faith and has to give up religious education in schools. In addition, mosques and pious endowments [*vakıflar*] must be free [of state control]; religious groups and communities must be allowed to operate freely. May people establish schools, build hospitals and appoint their own imams to their own mosques. In short, the religious services must be left to the civil society.[87]

Thus, according to the authors, services such as education, healthcare as well as cultural, religious and economic activities belong to the domain of civil society. Yeni Zemin authors call for an end to state monopoly over these services and activities.

Yeni Zemin authors further discredit the state by arguing that the state is the major obstacle confronting the expansion of a larger civil societal domain. In other words, Yeni Zemin authors aspire to minimize the state as they see it responsible for shrinking the private spheres. This conception of the state in Yeni Zemin has certain parallels with the liberal understanding of the "minimum state". Similar to the neoliberal and neo-conservative critique of ideologies, the transformative role of politics and state intervention in the economy, Muslim intellectuals of the 1990s call for minimization of the state and privatization of the economy.[88] Their affiliation with the liberal thought is most evident in Muslim intellectuals' alliance with liberal intellectuals as can be observed in Yeni Zemin.

In this vein, some of the authors consider the reduction of the state's role in the economy as a *sine qua non* condition for its eventual retreat from the civil societal domain. For Mehmet

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[87] "Türkiye'de baskı altındaki dinin özgürleşme talebi", *Yeni Zemin*, Vol. 2, (February, 1993), 7-8. This article is also signed as Yeni Zemin.
[88] Özçetin, "Making of New Islamism", 210.

Metiner, the weight of the public sector in the overall economy and the state's role as a "livelihood supplier" (*rezzak*) through the State Economic Enterprises jeopardizes individual liberties. Metiner states that "if the state provides the livelihood like God and if [the state] deprives its citizens, who depend on the state for their livelihood, of even the freedom of talking about political matters, then the state has to give up its role as a livelihood supplier. As long as the state provides the livelihood, the domain of freedom of the individual and of the society will not enlarge".[89] Metiner's assertion of political and economic freedoms side by side indicates the strong affinity of his worldview with neoliberal and neo-conservative mindset dominant in post-1980s. The discontent with the state's dominance in the social relations is shared by both neoliberalism and Islamism of Yeni Zemin. Yeni Zemin authors envision civil society as the platform where competing ideas and worldviews would shape the politics without coercion, similar to the "exaltation of markets and of diversity" in neoliberal ideology. [90]

It is therefore not surprising to notice the links between the views advocated by Yeni Zemin and the Independent Industrialists and Businessmen's Association (Müstakil Sanayici ve İşadamları Derneği [MÜSİAD]), an Islamic business association. Established in 1990, MÜSİAD's membership mostly includes representatives of the pious Muslim bourgeoisie and the Anatolian entrepreneurs. Echoing Yeni Zemin's conceptions of the state, MÜSİAD advocates liberalization and privatization of the Turkish economy. MÜSİAD designates itself as a "free-market oriented, Anatolian based *national* bourgeoisie" as opposed to the "state-protected, Istanbul-based oligopolistic companies".[91] In this sense, the association declares itself to be estranged by the state's manipulative role in the economy which allegedly favors Istanbul-based

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[89] Mehmet Metiner, "'Rezzak devlet'e hayır!", *Yeni Zemin*, Vol. 8, (August, 1993), 15.
[90] Özçetin, "Making of New Islamism", 209.
[91] M. Hakan Yavuz, *Islamic Political Identity*, 93.

big industrialists, and calls for an end to state interventions. Thus, the distaste for the state's dominant role in civil society in the discourse of Yeni Zemin gears with the stance of broader Islamic segments against the state establishment in Turkey.

That Yeni Zemin authors make a distinction between civil society and political society, conceptualized as the state, is among the markers of the magazine's peculiarity within Islamic political thought. In theory, the traditional *tawhidi* understanding of Islam does not attribute independent spaces for the social and political domains. Although there are supporters of this understanding in the magazine[92], the majority of Yeni Zemin authors consider them as two separate fields. For Davut Dursun, "the much-debated civil society must be understood as a self-induced and self-organized society which is not political, i.e. not established by the state. This [civil] society is able to manage not only the economic affairs but also the cultural, legal, political and all other issues with its own will and its own organs. It must be recognized that our most important goal is to accelerate the process in which the political society is shrunk and the civil society is expanded".[93] Thus, in Yeni Zemin, the enlargement of civil society against state control has the primacy over other concerns. As will be discussed in detail, Yeni Zemin authors advocate an autonomous civil society in which the Islamic values and principles reign supreme, given their conviction that Muslimhood is the main identity of popular masses.

As such, Muslim intellectuals do not give up the ideal to have an Islamic society; rather they relinquish the idea of a top-down or Jacobinist Islamization of the society following the foundation of an Islamic state. Ümit Aktaş argues that

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[92] Atasoy Müftüoğlu is one of the ardent exponents of tawhidi (integralist) understanding of Islam. This worldview holds that Islam regulates both civil and political domains and provides principles organizing every aspects of life.
[93] Davut Dursun, "İslami devlet modeli üzerine", *Yeni Zemin*, Vol. 5, (May, 1993), 15.

> Naturally, Muslims have serious ideas and claims for governing a society in accordance with their faith. Some of these [ideas and claims] were compiled directly from Qur'an and the life of the Prophet. Nevertheless, these [ideas and claims] provide us with the principles and aims of the government, not the governing method. In this sense, the state is not an indispensable entity; it is rather a mode of organization, an apparatus related to the technique [of government]. It is not an aim. As deceased Imam Khomeini suggests, the aim of Muslims is to reach the knowledge of Allah [*marifetullaha ulaşmak*], not to the government. So the government is a tool, among others, in this quest.[94]

Aktaş points out to an autonomous field outside the domain of the government and posits Islam within this field. This understanding suggests that Islam does not need the state or political power in order to exist as a religion that shapes the social life of Muslims. Thus, capturing the state ceased to be *the* path towards an Islamic society. Therefore, the fundamental problem in Yeni Zemin is how the state would be liberalized and shrunk so that the obstacles and dangers in front of an Islamic civil society would be eliminated.

For Yeni Zemin authors, one crucial dimension of this problem is that the state is considered to be a "sacred" or a "transcendental" entity by ordinary citizens, including devout Muslims, in Turkey. People's redundant reverence to the state is one of the major impediments to organize an Islamic civil society which is antagonistic to the state in Turkey. Therefore, Yeni Zemin authors constantly emphasize that the state cannot be comprehended as a "sacred" entity. For instance, Davut Dursun states that "People are not for the state, the state is for people! The state is not an organization putting people in order [*insanlara çekidüzen veren*]; it is only an instrument to realize the common moral and social ideals determined by the faith! Yes, it is only an instrument [*araç*]! *This instrument cannot and must not be sacred*".[95] Neither the state establishment nor its continuity comes before the good of individuals and communities. In other

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[94] Ümit Aktaş, "Devlet; ama nereye kadar?", *Yeni Zemin*, Vol. 5, (May, 1993), 19.
[95] Davut Dursun, ibid. Italics added.

words, attributing the state a position superior to individuals or society is straightforwardly rejected in the magazine.

Almost all the authors persistently remind their readers that "sacralizing the state"[96] is an erroneous tradition of Islamic Empires from the Umayyad to the Ottomans.[97] According to Davut Dursun, the military-bureaucratic elite of the late Ottoman Empire re-shaped this tradition with the notion of "modern state". The republic was founded by the Kemalist elite based on this understanding of the state. "Therefore," says Dursun, "we are faced with a relentless statism in every sphere. The state, so to speak, considers it necessary to organize the way people breathe".[98] Yeni Zemin authors often associate the transcendental and paternalistic conception of the state with Kemalist modernization. In so doing, they address the Islamic segments of the society which hold a right-wing conservative and statist mentality. In order to banalize the state and to convince the Islamic segments to drop statist conservatism, Yeni Zemin authors leverage on the strong anti-Kemalist sentiments dominant among these social groups

Yeni Zemin particularly addresses the RP politicians for their alleged state-centric political attitude. The party's conservative leadership is specifically criticized by Yeni Zemin authors for several reasons. Mehmet Metiner reports that the RP objected to reorganization of the General Staff under the Ministry of Defense and to a new regulation for the Law of Criminal Procedures on the grounds that the regulation would endanger the security of the state. Moreover, Metiner states: "I have the RP Monitoring Committee's report dating 1992. Somewhere in the

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[96] "Sacralization of the state" is coined by Emilio Gentile. Gentile uses the phrase to describe Italian Fascism. According to him, "[f]ascism was a political religion and it idolized the State as well as the fatherland. Each citizen had no other goal in their life except that of dedicating themself [*sic*] body and soul to the fatherland". See, Emilio Gentile, *The Struggle of Modernity: Nationalism, Futurism, and Fascism*, (Westport: Praeger, 2003), 8. Here, I used this phrase to refer to the alleged tendency among popular masses in Turkey towards idolization of the state with which Yeni Zemin authors often express their discontent.

[97] Ümit Aktaş, ibid., 19-20.

[98] Davut Dursun, "Türkiye'de değişenler ve değişmeye karşı direnenler", *Yeni Zemin*, Vol. 1, (January, 1993), 22-23.

report it says exactly this: 'among the most serious damages that ANAP government inflicted upon the country is the subversion of the state cadres and the idea of the state. Far from subsiding, this subversion of the state and bureaucracy goes on increasing'. *Is this not a statist discourse?*"[99] Clearly, Metiner and like-minded intellectuals were highly disappointed by the approach of the RP. One of the most recurrent critiques of the party is the gap between the expectations of the RP supporters for the party to have the leading role in the desired transformation of Turkish politics and the pro *status quo* position of the party. Thus, the RP is perceived as a party which failed to understand the hopes vested in it by social groups eager to see a wholesale change in Turkey.

Yeni Zemin authors repeatedly assert that the main problem in Turkey is the political system itself; therefore, governments, regardless of their ideological orientations, are structurally incapable of remedying the country's problems. According to Altan Tan, the RP, as the party supported by social segments which demand a wholesale change in Turkey, should not merely be an alternative among other political parties adhering to the principles of the existing political system. As Tan concisely summarizes, the popular base of the RP envisions an alternative political system.[100] Muslim intellectuals, raising their critique of the state, claim to be the voice of those social segments which are estranged by the political system in Turkey. As such, Yeni Zemin appears as a platform where *dissident* Muslim intellectuals challenge both the ideological pillars and institutional formation of the Republic of Turkey.

Thus, although scholars of Islamic political movements relying on the moderation theory identify the conceptual changes in Islamic political thought in the 1990s, they cannot adequately

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[99] Mehmet Metiner, "Siyasette yeni arayışlar" (open forum discussion), *Yeni Zemin*, Vol. 2, (February, 1993), 24-25. Italics added.

[100] Altan Tan, "RP'de değişim sancıları" (open forum discussion), Vol. 1, (January, 1993), 36.

explain "the dynamics and direction of change".[101] Complicating the existing scholarship's narrative, the transformation in Islamic political thought exemplified here with Yeni Zemin does not represent a process of ideological moderation or of compliance with the existing rules of the game in Turkey. Yeni Zemin symbolizes a rather radical opposition to the state. This radical opposition is evident in the passage below from one of Mehmet Metiner's articles in the magazine:

> Do the demands of change aim to restore the regime? *I think this demand of change does not aim to restoring the regime; on the contrary* [demands of change] *aim to changing* [the regime] *completely*. When the demand for cleansing the state from ideologies or 'democratization of the state' is implemented we will see a new regime. Therefore, the comments such as rehabilitating the existing regime from within are frequently expressed by those who do not understand the change or those who do not want to comprehend the change.[102]

Thus, the ultimate ideal of Islamism, to change the regime in Turkey, remains intact; yet the envisioned political system, the means to attain it as well as the conceptual tools that Islamists employed in their discourses have changed in the direction envisaged by the post-Islamism framework.

Consequently, the most salient change in the Islamist discourse is that the state-centric ideal of Islamism was transcended and a civil understanding of Islam was adopted. As Ferhat Kentel suggests, the "erosion of the idea to conquer the state" was accompanied by urbanized Muslim intellectuals' demands to redefine the Islamic movement and a process of questioning the very notion of the state.[103] The abandonment of the classical Islamist ideals of Islamizing or conquering the state, according to Asef Bayat, "denotes a critical discursive departure or

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[101] Bayat, "Post-Islamism at Large", 27.

[102] Mehmet Metiner, "Herşeyi yeniden düşünmenin vaktidir", *Yeni Zemin*, Vol. 5, (May, 1993), 4. Italics added.

[103] Ferhat Kentel, "1990'ların İslami Düşünce Dergileri ve Yeni Müslüman Entellektüeller", in *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasal Düşünce Vol. 6: İslamcılık*, ed. Yasin Aktay (İstanbul: İletişim, 2006), 723.

pragmatic exit, albeit in diverse degrees, from an Islamist ideological package characterized broadly by monopoly of religious truth, exclusivism, and emphasis on obligations, towards acknowledging ambiguity, multiplicity, inclusion, and flexibility in principles and practices".[104] Following this framework, my findings indicate that, whether sincere or strategic, Muslim intellectuals in Yeni Zemin call for a larger and pluralistic civil society and a minimal and democratic polity.

Nevertheless, that the Islamist opposition abandoned revolutionary ideals, vanguardism and a top-down implementation of sharia and adopted a civil, pluralistic and democratic discourse does not indicate that a more accommodationist attitude is embraced by Muslim intellectuals in the 1990s in Turkey. Although democratization of the Islamic discourse is the main factor on which the scholars of Islamic moderation draw their arguments, the transformation in the Islamist discourse towards democratization does not indicate that Muslim intellectuals comply with the existing rules of politics in Turkey. Instead, the intellectuals conceive of democratization as a process of founding a new polity in Turkey. In the following section I will elaborate on the notions of democracy in Yeni Zemin in order to analyze the articulation of the concept for the Islamist critique of the political system in Turkey.

III.II.   Democracy and Democratic Mechanisms

In harmony with the conception of the state in Yeni Zemin, the commonly proposed political regime in the magazine is democracy. However, at the same time, democracy is a highly debated concept among Muslim intellectuals of the 1990s. Thus, democracy appears both as a concept that Muslim intellectuals employed in their challenge to the state establishment and as a platform

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[104] Bayat, "Post-Islamism at Large", 25.

of contention among Muslim intellectuals in the 1990s. There are domestic and international factors that drive discussions of democracy forward. Among the most important domestic factors are urbanization and bourgeoisification of Islamic segments of the society due mainly to Turkey's "economic and social opening to the world".[105] The references to the popular "demands of change" in Yeni Zemin, in a way, reflect the transformation of the Islamic segments of the society in this direction. Democracy is considered to be a system that could allow newly urbanized masses of the "periphery" to challenge the political domination of the "center".

On the other hand, the main international impulses are globalization and the end of Cold War. The very first article of the magazine argues that the collapse of the Soviet Union engendered a greater political vortex much more important than the end of a specific socio-political system: "the process named as the New World Order affected the countries unprepared to change more than others. The New World Order produced its own dynamics. This order of disorder gave birth to anti-centrist tendencies [*merkez-kaç eğilimler*]".[106] Accordingly, the so called New World Order suggests liberal democracy as the only viable option after the end of the Cold War. Yeni Zemin authors construe that a pluralistic democracy is the only alternative of Turkey within this "new order" of things. Nevertheless, there are authors seeing this discourse on the ineluctability of democracy as the only viable political system as a maneuver against an Islamic political alternative. The main concern of these intellectuals is that Islam becomes the next target of the West after the collapse of communism.

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[105] İhsan Dağı, "Post-Islamism *à la Turca*", 86.
[106] "Türkiye'nin 70 yıllık politiası: Değişmeden İlerlemek", 7.

III.II.I. Notion(s) of Democracy

Yeni Zemin authors' conceptions and definitions of democracy are rather diversified. I identify three different ways of understanding democracy among Yeni Zemin authors: For the first group, which holds the majority in the magazine, democracy is only a form of government which determines the procedures of political decision-making processes. The second group holds that democracy is a form of organization which is not limited to high politics. Democracy defines non-hierarchical and horizontal organizations ranging from political parties to NGOs and even to religious communities. For the last group, democracy is more than a political technique; it is a *modus vivendi* or a philosophy. Therefore, it offers an alternative lifestyle to an Islamic one.

For example, Davut Dursun maintains that democracy basically assigns the political decision-making process and the execution of decisions to society itself. Usually these tasks are carried out by representatives of the people. However, the main problem of this political decision-making process regards the ways in which the demands of the people are transmitted to the political system responsible for establishing rules and implementing them. Political parties and political pressure groups arise to solve this problem. As such, "the existence of these institutions is the *sine qua non* condition for democracy and they guarantee democracy's smooth operation".[107] On the other hand, Rasim Özdenören argues that democracy cannot be conceived only as a representational governmental system: "More importantly, it must be reckoned that [democracy] is a mode of thinking. This mode of thinking can be summarized with its attribution of the sovereignty, i.e. legislative authority and duty, to the will Man. The Humanist principle, 'man is the measure of all things' is applied to democracy as well. This principle allows people to

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[107] Davut Dursun, "Demokrasi ve siyaset yapmanın önceliği", *Yeni Zemin*, Vol. 6, (June, 1993), 10.

disregard the divine verdicts and to proclaim its independence vis-à-vis the Church".[108] Özdenören, points out to the ideational dimension of democracy and the historical roots of this dimension. Accordingly, democracy is a profane system which is based on human reason rather than divine will.

Authors' attitudes towards democracy vary subject to their definitions of the concept. Those who conceptualize democracy as a mode of government or organization have positive attitudes towards democracy. According to Mehmet Metiner, democracy is the best among alternative modes of government. Metiner asserts that "between a despotic state and a democratic regime, we must certainly prefer democracy. … Undoubtedly, democracy is an advanced liberal regime compared to other Western political regimes".[109] Metiner believes that democratization can enlarge the realm of freedom for the Islamic movement in Turkey. For him, democracy provides Muslims with the opportunity to express their voice for a wholesale change in Turkish politics through allowing Muslims for political participation. In a similar vein, Davut Dursun and Altan Tan embrace democracy as a better alternative compared to authoritarian, totalitarian and monarchic regimes. Thus, democracy is seen rather as a lesser evil among the political systems by these intellectuals. The main criterion of Metiner, Tan and Dursun is the efficacy of the system in the development of the Islamic movement. In this regard, they consider democracy as a system that Muslims can benefit.

Ümit Aktaş is another pro-democracy author who defines democracy, beyond its political meaning, "as a mode of organization. The essential characteristic of this mode of organization is that it is based on horizontal networks, participation and consultation (*istişare*) rather than an

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[108] Rasim Özdenören, "Demokrasi egemen sınıfın lehinedir", *Yeni Zemin*, Vol. 6, (June, 1993), 21.
[109] Metiner, ibid., 5.

authoritarian hierarchy".[110] Aktaş thinks democracy is the most humane and, interestingly, the most Islamic system of government among its alternatives. According to him, the reason for Muslims' prejudice against democracy is that it is originally a Western concept. However, he cautions, Muslims have adopted and used different concepts and methods originated from other civilizations throughout their history. Accordingly, the political regimes experienced in the Islamic history were inherited from the Muslim philosophers who were deeply influenced by "philosophers such as Aristotle and Plato who despised people's will and believed that people would always choose the wrong". For Aktaş, the antidemocratic attitudes stemmed from this historical trajectory cause others to perceive Muslims as pro-sultanistic (*padişahçı*) and relegate Muslims to a repellent position".[111] Therefore, Muslims must break down their prejudices because democracy brings along the values such as participation, consultancy, pluralism and respect for individual liberties which are immanent in Islam for Aktaş.

On the other hand, although Ali Bulaç prefers democracy over other systems of rule arguing that Islam can blossom in an environment where basic rights and liberties, political participation and freedom of speech are guaranteed,[112] he does not approve of Muslims' direct participation in modern politics via democratic processes. In addition to his critique of the main pillars of democracy, individualism, representation and majority, Bulaç underscores the link between Western modernity and democracy. For Bulaç, Muslims have a more serious problem than being suppressed, which is "the problem of transcending the modernity through Islam. It is highly unlikely that we can transcend the modernity by legitimizing the modern instruments and utilizing them without questioning –at least without being selective. Democracy is one of these

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[110] Ümit Aktaş, "Demokratik gelenek ve müslümanlar", *Yeni Zemin*, Vol. 6, (June, 1993), 12.
[111] Ibid., 15.
[112] Ali Bulaç, "İslam özgür bir ortamda gelişir", *Yeni Zemin*, Vol. 4, (April, 1993), 73.

modern instruments, perhaps the most important one".[113] Thus, Muslims have to be careful in participating in democratic politics since it might lead Muslims' appropriation of modern values. In this way, for Bulaç, Muslims may adapt to Western modernity and lose the authenticity derived from their Islamic identity although democratic politics can be profitable for the Islamic movement in the short run.[114]

Despite the dominance of demands for democratization in the magazine, there are authors who openly repudiate democracy. The anti-democracy authors mainly contend that the quest for consolidating a democratic regime in Turkey is an invalid effort for two reasons: Islam already offers the basic governmental principles; and democracy is an historical product of the political and social conflicts within the West which is not compatible with the dynamics of Islamic societies. Rasim Özdenören argues that the economic liberalization coupled with the so called New World Order debates exacerbates democracy discussions in Turkey. As stated, he stresses the historical context within which democracy was originated and the profane character of the concept. Özdenören maintains that it is possible to observe the imprints of these factors in the problems of democracy. Accordingly, democracy is originated from the class-based social system of the Western societies and although oppressed classes are enfranchised the sovereignty always belongs to the dominant classes. Thus, representation and the people's will are but deceptive labels in democratic systems. Islam, on the other hand, "surpasses democracy and it refers to a more encompassing system. Claiming that Islam complies with democracy or reducing Islam to democracy would result in holding Islam accountable for the inadequacies and dilemmas of democracy".[115] Atasoy Müftüoğlu takes the criticism of democracy a step further. He emphasizes

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[113] Ali Bulaç "Demokrasi içinde politikaya katılmak", *Yeni Zemin*, Vol. 6, (June, 1993), 18.
[114] Ibid.
[115] Özdenören, ibid., 21.

that democracy is a political organization which fits in exclusively with Western societies. Accordingly, democracy is an apparatus of Western imperialism when imposed in a non-Western context. Thus, contemporary Western imperialism encroaches upon the Muslim World through concepts like democracy, pluralism and laicism. Müftüoğlu maintains that Islam, instead of pluralism, endeavors a participatory system based on shared responsibilities and the understanding of "enjoining good and forbidding wrong".[116]

In response to the Islamist critique of democracy, authors having positive attitudes towards the concept dissociate democracy from some of the values associated with the concept. The most notable example is the rejection of any link between laicism and democracy. For instance, Mehmet Metiner argues that "being laic and being democrat is not the same thing of course. Those who act as if they are laic in Turkey are not real democrats; because, if we pay attention, they straightforwardly oppose demands for 'real democracy'. For the sake of appearance [*zevahiri kurtarmak için*] they posit laicism as the prerequisite of democracy".[117] Authors such as Davut Dursun, Abdurrahman Dilipak and Ümit Aktaş similarly problematize the assumed link between laicism and democracy. For these authors, laicism is not a prerequisite for democracy. As such, Yeni Zemin authors address not only Muslim intellectuals opposing democracy but also the Islamic segments of the society who have reservations about democracy as a Western-originated political system[118] through dissociating the link between secularism and

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[116] Atasoy Müftüoğlu, "Yabancı ve yalancı ufuklar", *Yeni Zemin*, Vol. 4, (April, 1993), 78.

[117] Mehmet Metiner, "Devlet, dinden elini çekmeli", *Yeni Zemin*, Vol. 2, (February, 1993), 4.

[118] Yeni Zemin evidently received negative responses from the readership. The magazine felt necessary to justify their position towards democracy as well as other concepts associated to Western liberal thought in the editorials of the first few volumes. For instance, the editorial of the fifth volume asserts that Yeni Zemin is certainly based on an Islamic worldview: "That we speak in others' language does not mean that we surrendered. … We too know that it is not possible to build a new World with 'borrowed concepts' [such as democracy and civil society]. However, we believe that we should not turn our back to these concepts which are popularly used to conceive and express social-political issues, just because they are 'foreign'". See "Editorial", *Yeni Zemin*, Vol. 5, (May, 1993), 1.

democracy. Moreover, the notion of democracy in Yeni Zemin becomes an instrument of Muslim intellectuals in their challenge to the secular-Kemalist elite.

However, this notion of democracy indicates a particular interpretation in a way that the concept refers, for Muslim intellectuals, to an "authentic representation" of the people.[119] In this sense, conformity with people's values and political participation are the two of the most recurrent dimensions in Yeni Zemin authors' notions of democracy. According to Ergün Yıldırım, the existing political system neither conforms to the values of people in Turkey, which the author refers to as a "religious society", nor does it allow for political participation. In order to secure laicism, the political system prevents full political participation of the people of Turkey who supposedly have a strong Islamic identity. Thus, laicism is not a pre-requisite of democracy in Turkey; on the contrary, for Yıldırım, it is an obstacle for a properly functioning democratic system. Therefore, he argues, "democracy was hampered by the dominant political apparatuses due to the perception that it would lead to reactionary [*irticaya yol açacağından*] since its real implementation means the reflection of the social identity onto political will [*toplumun kendini kimliğiyle siyasal iradeye yansıması*]".[120] According to the author, the imposition of laicism over the people of Turkey who are Muslim by a great majority is an anti-democratic practice due to laicism's incompatibility with the Muslim identity of popular masses.

The notion of democracy in Yeni Zemin, crystallizing in the debates on the relationship between democracy and secularism, calls for an analysis of Muslim intellectuals' expectations from a democratic system. That democracy is often associated to a pluralistic civil society, freedom of faith and speech, deliberative governance and individual rights and liberties in the

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[119] Nuray Mert, "Türkiye İslamcılığına Tarihsel Bir Bakış", in *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasal Düşünce Vol. 6: İslamcılık*, ed. Yasin Aktay (İstanbul: İletişim, 2006), 418.
[120] Ergün Yıldırım, "Türkiye siyasal geleneğinde demokrasi", *Yeni Zemin*, Vol. 6, (June, 1993), 17.

magazine indicates a desire to have a socio-political environment where Islamic segments of the society can live under equal terms with others without the oppressive measures of the state. However, when the concept is used to refer to popular sovereignty, the underlying assumption held by most of the authors is that people in Turkey have a strong Muslim identity. This assumption sometimes suggests that, in Turkey, the true sovereignty of people would entail a government in accordance with Islamic principles, or at least one which favors them. In both cases, democratization advocated by Muslim intellectuals serves primarily for the benefits of the Islamic segments.[121]

In fact, the way Yeni Zemin authors justify their democratization and liberation demands reconciles the two possible scenarios regarding their possible expectations from democracy. For example Ali Bulaç argues that Islam spreads most effectively in a liberal environment by reminding the reader that Muslims consolidated their power after the Treaty of Hudaybiyyah with the infidels of Mecca during the life of the prophet.[122] Therefore, it is the responsibility of Muslims to struggle for basic rights and liberties, an open society, freedom of faith, speech and organization as well as human rights. In a similar vein, Altan Tan maintains that

> the change refers to the formation of favorable environment for tabligh[123] [*tebliğ*] and guidance [*irşad*] by eliminating the pressure and oppression, although impiety [*küfür*] still exists. Getting rid of a 70-year-old straightjacket [*70 yıllık bir deli gömleği*] is going the relieve Muslims the most. … Similar events happened in the Soviet Union. Gorbachev did not replace Marxism with Islamic sharia. Countries slid into chaos. However, more favorable circumstances occurred for the believers in any case.[124]

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[121] Bayat, "Post-Islamism at Large", 10.

[122] Ali Bulaç, "İslam özgür bir ortamda gelişir", 72.

[123] "Communication of a message or revelation; fulfillment of a mission. Interchangeable with dawah (propagation of faith) in modern usage". See *The Oxford Dictionary of Islam*, accessed http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com/article/opr/t125/e2295?_hi=0&_pos=17#

[124] Altan Tan, "Kardeşlerimizle hasbihal", *Yeni Zemin*, Vol. 6, (June, 1993), 51.

Thus, democratization of the political system in Turkey is considered to be necessary to the extent that it allows for a greater space of freedom to the Islamic segments of the society. Since Muslim intellectuals posit Muslimhood as the authentic identity of popular masses, freedom of the people often intertwines with freedom for religion and religious activities in their discourse.[125]

At the theoretical level, however, whether democracy refers to a desire of engagement with the political system or to an instrument of opposition in the discourses of Yeni Zemin authors is not crystal clear. In order to further analyze this question, in the following part, I will elaborate on the authors' concrete suggestions for democratic mechanisms in Turkey.

III.II.II. Democratic Institutions and the Constitution

The concrete suggestions of authors for a change in the political system in Turkey concentrate on strengthening the position of popularly elected officials vis-à-vis the appointed bureaucrats. Thus, Yeni Zemin authors demand for reforms which enhance the role of representation in the political decision-making processes. For example, Ergün Yıldırım maintains that "[e]ven though the people elected a certain political cadre as the speaker of its will, it remains as 'government' or parliament; outside it [the elected cadre] there stands the state which consists of appointed officials who are above the elected".[126] The majority of authors agree upon the fact that the parliament and governments are the true representatives of the people. However, authors assert that the parliament members and governments are restricted by the supra-political institutions of the state such as the Constitutional Court, and the National Security Council (*Milli Güvenlik Kurulu* [MGK]). Thus, it is necessary for Yeni Zemin authors to regulate the supra-political

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[125] Özçetin, "Making of New Islamism", 279.
[126] Yıldırım, ibid.

institutions in order to increase the efficacy of the parliament which is the only organ where the popular will is represented.

As the topic of an everlasting public debate in Turkey, the constitution appears as the focal point of discussions in Yeni Zemin regarding the political system in Turkey. Therefore, the authors' suggestions concentrate on this topic. Defining the constitution as the textual form of social contract among the fellow citizens, Yeni Zemin authors unanimously assert that constitutions must be suitable to the dynamics of a society. According to Mehmet Metiner, "in Turkey, individuals, as the respondents of the constitution, have never had a voice in the constitution-making process. Constitutions were drafted by persons approved by the military. Now, this process has to be reversed; because, even though constitutions have a technical [legal] dimension, these texts directly bear upon people. As such, constitutions are the textual form of 'social contract' too".[127] Metiner specifically highlights the necessity to provide a favorable environment for a full political participation of all segments of the society in drafting a constitution. For other authors too, only in such an environment a constitution can be prepared on a social consensus, which is considered to be the source of constitution's legitimacy.[128] The constitution must be prepared in accordance with the demands of the society and more importantly by the society itself. Nevertheless, the vast majority of Yeni Zemin authors underscore that those criteria had never been met in preparations of the constitutions Turkey have had thus far. Moreover, they have designed to protect the state against the social forces. Therefore, none of those constitutions, including the current 1982 Constitution, can be considered legitimate for Yeni Zemin authors.

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[127] Mehmet Metiner, "Toplum merkezli, özgürlükçü sivil bir anayasa" *Yeni Zemin*, Vol. 4 (April, 1993), 4.
[128] Abdurrahman Dilipak, "İlah devlet öngören anayasa istemiyoruz", *Yeni Zemin*, Vol. 4, (April, 1993), 26.

A constitution drafted in accordance with the dynamics of the society is thought to have the potential to end the major problems of Turkey such as state's dominance over the civil society, persecution of the Islamic segments and the Kurdish question. It is stated in the editorial of the volume which covers the constitution debates that if and only if the Islamic and Kurdish identities are addressed the constitution can be pluralistic, democratic and libertarian.[129] In the constitution debates Yeni Zemin authors frequently refer to social, cultural and religious diversity of the society in Turkey. This social diversity is absolutely incompatible to the framework of the modern nation-state which is characterized in Yeni Zemin as an enforcing (*dayatmacı*) and standardizing (*tektipleştirici*) mentality. Therefore, for the authors a constitution within this framework, like the current 1982 Constitution and the previous constitutions of modern Turkey, can only exacerbate the problems of the country. Instead, Yeni Zemin authors postulate a pluralistic constitution which complies with the multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, multi-religious and multi-sectarian structure of the society.

The most important dimension of this postulate is a pluralist legal structure. Some of the authors envision a new political system where each distinct social group is granted internal autonomy and has its own legal system. This notion of legal pluralism springs from the so called Medina model offered as an Islamic alternative to the modern nation-state. The model was first articulated by Ali Bulaç in the Turkish context and has become a highly contentious matter among Muslim intellectuals in the 1990s. Bulaç developed this alternative political system based on a document signed by Prophet Mohammed with the people of Medina after Muslims hegira to that city, called the Medina Charter. Presumably the document guarantees the coexistence of Muslims and Jews of the city and their liberty of implementing their own canon laws within each

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[129] Editorial, *Yeni Zemin*, Vol. 4, (April, 1993), 1.

community.[130] It is important to note that the document is signed by Muslims and Jews under equal terms and is meant to secure the pluralist structure of Medina. The model derived from Medina Charter is believed to be a suitable alternative political system in contemporary Turkey where Muslims and non-Muslims should peacefully coexist without giving up from their authentic identities.

Although both the authenticity of the document and the meaning attributed to it by Ali Bulaç and like-minded intellectuals is a matter of heated debate among Muslim intellectuals, the model appears to be the single most serious political alternative project of Muslim intellectuals in Turkey. According to Ümit Aktaş, "the conditions of the social contract in the form of constitution have been organized by the military for 70 years. Medina Charter is an Islamic projection to the state of nature which reveals the necessity to reorganize the social contract as a free convention by the civil society in Turkey".[131] At the center of the Medina model, Aktaş designates the participation of Islamic segments in the formation of a new polity in Turkey. Thus, the model reflects Muslims' aspiration for political participation without giving up their authentic identity. The Medina model, despite all the controversies, is of utmost importance in the sense that Muslim intellectuals articulate their radical opposition to the system with a concrete alternative project antagonistic to the existing political system in Turkey.

The last part of this chapter takes the discussion of Islamic alternatives proposed in Yeni Zemin a step further. The analysis of the Kurdish question demonstrates the articulation of democratic concepts such as pluralism and basic rights and liberties in one of the most topical

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[130] "İslami Toplum Düzenine Doğru Bir Adım: Medine Vesikası" (open forum discussion), *Yeni Zemin*, Vol. 5 (May, 1993), 29-35.

[131] Ümit Aktaş, "Doğal toplum, ütopya ve anayasa tartışmaları", *Yeni Zemin*, Vol. 4 (April, 1993), 28.

problems of Turkey. Furthermore, the discussion will allow for a more refined version of Muslim intellectuals' critique of the modern nation-state establishment in Turkey.

III.III.   The Kurdish Question and the Administrative Structure

The Kurdish question is among the most central themes in Yeni Zemin. The political context of Turkey in particular and the Middle East in general inevitably calls for a discussion of the Kurdish question. Together with Muslims (of Turkish origin), Kurds are considered to be the other major social group which has been hit hard by the Kemalist state. Therefore, Yeni Zemin authors refer to the Kurds as one of the social groups demanding a wholesale change in political system in Turkey. The growing awareness of the Kurdish question owes much to the rising Kurdish insurgency through the struggle of Kurdish militia forces after 1984 as well as the establishment of a de facto autonomous Kurdish government in Northern Iraq after the Gulf War. However, instead of the agency of the Kurdish political movement and the armed struggle of the Kurdistan Worker's Party (Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê in Kurdish [PKK]), Yeni Zemin authors highlight the post-1980 economic and political liberalization and the role of Turgut Özal for the Kurds to raise their demands and the Kurdish question to gain significance. The authors who extensively write about the issue are careful not to equate the Kurdish question and the mainstream Kurdish political movement.

There are other reasons, specific to Yeni Zemin, for the fact that the Kurdish question appears as a central theme in the magazine. As stated, Yeni Zemin is affiliated to the *Zehra Vakfı*, a Nurcu association in the Kurdish-Islamic line. The owner of the magazine, Osman Tunç, is the manager of the association. Moreover, in addition to Osman Tunç and the editor Mehmet Metiner, there are a number of authors in the magazine who are of Kurdish origin such as Altan

Tan, Abdülvahid Vural and Gıyasettin Bingölballı. The impact of these factors can immediately be observed in the current affairs section as well as in pages on domestic and international politics. The main elements in the Kurdish political movement such as the PKK and the People's Labor Party (Halkın Emek Partisi [HEP], active between 1990-1993) or the Democracy Party (Demokrasi Partisi [DEP], active between 1991-1994) are followed closely by reporters of Yeni Zemin. Furthermore, problems of Kurds living outside Turkey, notably Kurds of Northern Iraq, are often reported.

III.III.I. Problematizing the Kurdish Question

Although Yeni Zemin's self-asserted claim to be an Islamic magazine suggests that the authors are exclusively preoccupied with the problems of Islamic segments, by no means is the Kurdish question seen as an extraneous issue in the magazine. Indeed for some authors it is the most serious current problem in Turkey. The problems of Muslims (Islamic segments of the society) and that of the Kurds are often mentioned side by side. The Kurdish question has become significant to the extent that Muslim intellectuals exploit the failure of the state to integrate the Kurds into the political system for their critique of the modern nation-state. Muslim intellectuals regard the problem as a terrain on which they have the opportunity to assert the competence of their alternative political projects.[132] In this sense, Yeni Zemin authors unanimously express that Kemalism is the fundamental cause of the Kurdish question as well as the problems of Muslims. Thus, the Kurdish question is also an auxiliary theme for Muslim intellectuals in their challenge to the Kemalist establishment and the political system in Turkey. In fact, according to the authors, the political system that works in accordance with Kemalist principles is the major obstacle in front of a possible solution.

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[132] Serdar Şengül, "İslamcılık, Kürtler ve Kürt Sorunu", in *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasal Düşünce Vol. 6: İslamcılık*, ed. Yasin Aktay (İstanbul: İletişim, 2006), 529.

For Yeni Zemin authors, the Kurdish question mainly stems from the notion of modern state on which the republic was established in the 1920s. The problem has exacerbated further with the security concerns of the politicians and statesmen approaching the problem through the glance of the military. Emphasizing the necessity to distinguish the Kurdish question and the terror problem, Osman Tunç states "the Kurdish question is not an absolute terror problem. It is foremost an identity problem. The problem must be discussed within the framework of democratic principles and solved by the people's assemblies in a humane way. … As a result, we need to assert that the Kurds always accept the coexistence [*beraberlik*] based on basic human rights. Thus, it is more adequate to consider the problem within the framework of human rights instead of religion and ideology".[133] The military and violent methods employed by the state to solve the problem are frequently problematized in Yeni Zemin. Thus, for the authors the Kurdish question is not merely a terror problem and it cannot be reduced to the PKK. The Kurdish question is thoroughly a socio-political problem of Turkey. Therefore, it can be solved only via political means within the framework of democracy and human rights.

For Yeni Zemin authors, the first step towards a solution within the framework of democracy and human rights should be the recognition of Kurdish identity. Even though, Turkish politicians started referring to the Kurdish identity with the rising guerilla struggle of the PKK, Mehmet Metiner argues that politicians do not explain what they exactly mean by this. The author maintains that "the immediate measures to take at this stage are to recognize the Kurdish identity and to form the legal basis of cultural rights that the recognition entails".[134] For Metiner, recognition of the Kurdish identity is only meaningful when Kurds' political, social and cultural rights are fully recognized. In the magazine, free use of Kurdish in the media, education in

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[133] Osman Tunç, "Gönüllü beraberlik" *Yeni Zemin*, Vol. 17 (May-June, 1994), 17-18.
[134] Mehmet Metiner, "Ayrışma değil, gönüllü beraberlik", *Yeni Zemin*, Vol. 7 (July, 1993) 6.

mother language, popular election of governors and chiefs of police are notable examples of cultural and political rights which must be granted to Kurds. It is important to note that Yeni Zemin authors hardly ever discuss the Kurdish question as a socio-economic problem. Rather, they underscore the importance of a democratic struggle for the acquisition of legal guarantees for the Kurds' political equality and cultural rights.

The Kurdish question is defined foremost as a political problem of the state which has to be solved for the continuity of the state. Thus, a democratic solution for this problem does not weaken the state or disintegrate the country. On the contrary, a lack of a political solution may jeopardize the unity of the country.[135] For the authors, problems arising due to the state's denial of the Kurdish question, such as terror, directly impair the legitimate existence of the state. Yalçın Akdoğan maintains that the solution must not be left at the governments' discretion since the Kurdish question is thought to be a "state problem". It must become a permanent public policy of the state.[136] As stated, authors believe that Kurdish question is induced by the political system in Turkey. Yet, the political system is thought to be incompatible with the social structure of Turkey. Therefore, the solution of the problem is not possible within the limits of the current political system according to the authors. The state is not capable of solving the problems of the Kurds.

Thus, authors maintain that it is inevitable to change the present notion of state altogether to bring the Kurdish question to an end. According to Mehmet Metiner, "it is acknowledged that authoritarian and totalitarian nation-states hinder the peaceful coexistence of diverse social groups in a new world order in which religious and ethnic identities gain significance again. …

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[135] Mehmet Metiner, "Bürokrasi yerel yönetime taşınmamalı", *Yeni Zemin*, Vol. 14 (February, 1994), 20.

[136] Yasin Doğan, "Kürt sorunu kilitlendi", *Yeni Zemin*, Vol. 11 (November, 1993), 37. Yasin Doğan is a penname of Yalçın Akdoğan. He has been kept using this penname during 2000s as well.

The Kurdish question becomes gangrenous because of the nation-state establishment. It is impossible to solve this problem by abiding the nation-state paradigm".[137] Metiner's remarks suggest that the drawbacks of the notion of modern nation-state become concrete through the deadlock Turkish nation-state faced with the Kurdish question. Metiner uses the critique of nationalism and the nation-state establishment throughout the world within the context of the post-1980 globalization as a legitimate basis for his ideas. Thus, the Kurdish question provides yet another example for Muslim intellectuals' critique of the republic which they often associate with authoritarian and totalitarian nation-states of the 20th century.

The so called Turkish-Islamic Synthesis project through which the state attempted to restore the legitimacy of Turkish nation-state vis-à-vis the rising Islamic and ethnic sentiments is strictly criticized in Yeni Zemin. Furthermore, the authors are dissatisfied with the ambivalent attitude of the RP towards the rising Kurdish movement and the party's tendency to reduce the problem to an issue of Muslims. For example, Osman Tunç argues that the RP maintain a centrist and nationalist stance towards the Kurdish question. Therefore, the party's arguments and slogans such as "Islamic fraternity" (*İslam kardeşliği*) become increasingly elusive and insincere: "If we do not show the content of Islamic fraternity, it does not mean anything as an abstract concept. 'Islamic fraternity' suggests that a person wishes for a Muslim the same thing that s/he wishes for another Muslim [*bir kişinin kardeşi için istediğini diğer müslüman kardeşi için de istemesi olayıdır*]. If there is no such unity, we cannot talk about 'Islamic fraternity'".[138] Tunç straightforwardly rejects the approaches that reduce the problems of the Kurds to the problems of the Muslims in Turkey. The emphasis on the Kurdish ethnic solution in Yeni Zemin suggests that

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[137] Mehmet Metiner, "Resmi paradigm Kürt sorununu çözemiyor", *Yeni Zemin*, Vol. 17 (May-June, 1994), 21.

[138] Osman Tunç, "RP'de değişim sancıları" (open forum discussion), *Yeni Zemin*, Vol. 1 (January, 1993) 38.

the Islamic fraternity is envisioned as an equality of Kurds and Turks in identity issues, as well as cultural and democratic/political rights.

Although Yeni Zemin authors criticize the state, the RP and the Islamic segments for they attribute a role to religion to solidify the *status quo* in the Kurdish question, Islam nevertheless provides the ultimate solution to the problem according to the authors. The aforementioned challenge to the nation-state establishment in the magazine indicates the authors' desire to replace this notion of the state with another one in accordance with Islamic principles, such as the Medina model. According to Osman Tunç, "passing from totalitarian, oppressive, firmly centralized structure of the nation-state to pluralist, individual- and service-based structure of the ummah" should be the ultimate goal of Turks and Kurds together.[139] Thus, the proposed alternative of the nation-state is a state based not on national identity but on ummah. Note that ummah as a political unit refers to an individual-centered polity in which the rights and liberties of individuals come before the duties and obligations towards the state.

Hence, the Kurdish question debates clearly exemplify Muslim intellectuals' aspiration to transcend modern nation-states through utilizing democratic concepts such as pluralism and human rights in harmony with Islamic principles. The Kurdish question also appears as a terrain on which Muslim intellectuals of Yeni Zemin assert their discontent with the existing political system in Turkey. In the final part of this chapter, I review the intellectuals' proposals for a solution in relation to the administrative structure of Turkey in order to understand their opposition to the existing system.

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[139] Osman Tunç, "Ümmet gerçeğini yaşama geçirelim", *Yeni Zemin*, Vol. 10, (October, 1993), 70-71.

III.III.II. Administrative Structure and Local Governments

The present administrative system in Turkey is considered by Yeni Zemin authors to be one of the main causes of social and economic problems of the country. Thus, radical administrative reforms are essential components for a change in the 70-year-old system which already deadlocked by the 1990s. The most concrete and influential reform proposal in Yeni Zemin is autonomy for local government. In addition to the autonomy of municipalities, Yeni Zemin authors suggest governors and the local chief of police to be elected by the local people. Yeni Zemin authors' foremost expectation from such reforms, parallel to the authors' desire to have a minimal state, is the possibility to remove the overly bureaucratic structure of the state concentrated in the center. The proposed autonomy for local government is also closely related to the Kurdish question as the vast majority of the authors think that the Kurdish question cannot be solved within the present administrative system.

According to Yeni Zemin authors, the administrative system of Turkey, notably civil and military bureaucracy, was designed under the conditions of the Cold War. As the war ended, this highly sophisticated and bulky structure is not needed anymore. In an article signed as Yeni Zemin, it is stated that

> the nation-state, last century's product, cannot undertake the changes necessitated by the global problems. Neither can it resist the local demands and cleavages. Some states are about to transfer their authorities to international institutions and local governments. Democratization, free market and social movements compel this trend. In Turkey, on the other hand, a firmly centralist bureaucratic structure paralyzes the functionality of its own organs and confronts with democratic and civil demands.[140]

Note that the transfer of authority from the central bureaucracy to local government is closely associated to the ideal of minimizing the state. Accordingly, the post-Cold War condition features

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[140] "Demokratikleşme sürecinde Özerk Yerel Yönetimler", *Yeni Zemin*, Vol. 14, (February, 1994) 9.

the merits of liberalization and democratization that can only be realized through transferring the authority of central bureaucracy to the local government. Thus, Yeni Zemin calls for a reform in the organization of local government. This reform proposal envisions not only greater political, economic and legal autonomy and authority for municipal administrations but also includes the establishment of more effective municipal councils in the form of local legislative institutions.[141]

In addition, Mehmet Metiner believes that empowerment of local government does not mean much in itself; rather it must be comprehended as part of a thoroughgoing democratization process in all aspects of social and political life in Turkey.[142] Metiner considers the autonomy of local government as an opportunity to facilitate the establishment of a fully-fledged participatory democracy. Thus, the topic is discussed in relation to the tension between the center aims at protecting the *status quo* and the people having been excluded from the political process since the foundation of the republic, mainly the Islamic segments and the Kurds, who demand a wholesale socio-political change in Turkey. For Yeni Zemin authors, the RP's growing power in municipalities in the 1990s indicates this duality between center and periphery. Therefore, it is important to comprehend the interest in the municipalities and debates on the share of authority between the central and local governments in Yeni Zemin within this context.

Greater political participation enabled by autonomy for municipalities is also important for the Kurdish question in the sense that it enhances political rights of the Kurds. However, authors do not envision the local autonomy exclusively for regions populated by the Kurds. Nor do they propose an ethnically-based fragmentation or federalism. Although it is stressed in an anonymous article that, contrary to the discourse of Kemalist elite, autonomy of local government

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[141] Ibid., 10-11.
[142] Mehmet Metiner, "Bürokrasi yerel yönetime taşınmamalı" 20.

does not forthrightly refer to federalism, "perceiving the words such as federalism and federal state as threats is not correct". The article continues: "the important thing is to establish a healthy democratic mentality".[143] The Kemalist tutelage, which is seen as the major obstacle in front of other necessary democratic reforms too, makes the notion of unitary state a taboo in Turkey. The lack of public discussions about the administrative structure of the state limits the number of opportunities to solve the Kurdish question within a democratic framework.

Although there is not a consensus on an ideal administrative system, the authors unanimously express their distaste with the centralist implementations of the nation-state in Turkey. Yeni Zemin maintains that Kemalism imposes an official ideology and a national identity from above which are not compatible with the characteristics of the society in Turkey. Since, in their view, Kemalism is the founding principle of the political system and the institutional formation of the state machinery is shaped by this principle, the political system must be changed from head to foot. Yeni Zemin envisions the change in a direction towards a decentralized, participatory and pluralistic polity. Kurds in Turkey are considered as one of the most enthusiastic social groups demanding a change in that manner together with Islamic segments of the society. Hence, Muslim intellectuals call for cooperation with the Kurdish political movement, similar to their burgeoning cooperation with liberal intellectuals, in their challenge to the existing system in Turkey.

III.IV.   Concluding Remarks

As a representative voice of the Islamism of the 1990s in Turkey, Yeni Zemin offers a broad vista of Islamist critique of the existing political system in Turkey. The magazine calls foremost for a

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[143] "Demokratikleşme sürecinde Özerk Yerel Yönetimler", 11.

democratization of the political system in Turkey and the state's retreat from the civil societal domain, with the impact of neoliberal globalization and the end of the Cold War. Fitting well in with Asef Bayat's post-Islamism framework, Yeni Zemin authors stress the necessity of democratization and a pluralist socio-political system. Thus, the state has ceased to be an end in itself for the cause of Islamic movement in the 1990s. Instead, it becomes the main object of Muslim intellectuals' interrogation of the socio-political system as a whole. Thus, unlike the studies suggesting the 1990s and, sometimes specifically Yeni Zemin, as an instance of ideological moderation in Islamic movement, Yeni Zemin authors' critique of the political system is rather radical and uncompromising. Their critical stance vis-à-vis the political system manifest itself most saliently in their conceptions of the state, discussion of democracy, constitution-making and the Kurdish question.

The Islamist critique of the political system problematizes the state's intervention into the civil society through the apparatuses of the modern state which supposedly control the minutest details of the citizens' everyday lives and homogenize the diversity within the society. In addition, Yeni Zemin authors also contend against the "idolization" of the state and argue for a "minimal state". Thus, they demand a wholesale change in the state establishment which, for Yeni Zemin authors, is the main pre-condition of a thoroughgoing democratization of Turkey. Accordingly, the state must be reorganized from the constitution to all the public institutions in accordance with the social exigencies. Yeni Zemin authors often resort to a "pragmatic" understanding of democracy as they conceive Muslimhood as the marker of the identity of popular masses. Therefore, their interpretation of democracy coincides with the aspirations of the Islamic segments of the society. Moreover, Yeni Zemin authors do not refrain to offer original political projects, alternative to the modern Western political systems as in the case of "Medina

Charter". Lastly, the debates on the Kurdish question in Yeni Zemin and the authors' solution proposals crystallize the discontent with the notion of the modern nation-state and bureaucratic centralization.

In short, the Islamic political thought in Yeni Zemin can best be described as a contentious and ambitious critique of the existing political system in Turkey from an Islamic point of view. This ideological stance also reflects the dynamism of political Islamic identity and the political Islamic movement –the RP and its grassroots, as well as the discontent of broader Islamic segments of the society with the socio-political system. The next chapter will demonstrate the trajectory of Yeni Zemin authors after February 28, after which the Islamic segments were harshly suppressed and the Islamic political movement underwent a deep transformation.

CHAPTER IV

The Aftermath of February 28

A year after Yeni Zemin stopped publishing, the Refah Party won the 1995 General Elections and came to power as the larger coalition partner.[144] However, the coalition did not last long. In the meeting of the National Security Council (Milli Güvenlik Konseyi [MGK]) on February 28, 1997, the military recommended measures against the activities of Islamic organizations and communities that the RP could not take without alienating its base.[145] Six months later, Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan, the RP leader, resigned and the coalition broke up. The higher judiciary bodies brought lawsuits against the party and its leaders in the following months. The RP was shut down by the Constitutional Court; Necmettin Erbakan and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, then mayor of Istanbul, were imprisoned for allegedly uttering public statements against Atatürk's principles. In addition to these political cases, the military-bureaucratic elite tried to restore the secular regime through various measures against the Islamic segments in this process.[146]

The Fazilet Party was founded in the end of 1997 as a successor of the RP. The FP maintained a rather pro-democratic, pro-free market and pro-EU position under the influence of the reformist wing of Milli Görüş and Muslim intellectuals. The lawsuits against the RP, and the

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[144] The RP formed the coalition with the True Path Party (Doğru Yol Partisi [DYP]).
[145] Hale & Özbudun, *Islamism, Democracy and Liberalism in Turkey*, 8.
[146] Hakan Yavuz, *Islamic Political Identity in Turkey*, 244.

party leaders were brought to the European Court of Human Rights. Other implementations such as regulations against the wear of headscarf and discharge of public employees who were allegedly affiliated to Islamic organizations were also claimed to be against human rights and brought to international courts. Meanwhile, the reformist wing made an attempt to take over the party administration in a congress but Abdullah Gül[147], the reformist candidate, lost the election against the Erbakan-backed Recai Kutan. The Constitutional Court shut down the FP in 2001 again on the ground that the party was associated with anti-secular activities. After the FP's closure the division within Milli Görüş became irreconcilable. The reformists, led by Tayyip Erdoğan, founded the AKP, while the conservatives pursued the same political line in the Felicity Party (Saadet Partisi [SP]).[148] The AKP managed to consolidate the base of the former Milli Görüş parties and reconcile different attitudes of center-right. The party won the 2002 General elections by a great margin and formed a single-party government.

By "February 28 process", I refer to the process of adamant persecution against the Islamic segments of the society including the shutting down of the Milli Görüş parties, the trials of Milli Görüş politicians as well as other measures against the wear of headscarf, the Imam-Hatip schools and the Qur'an seminaries following the MGK meeting on February 28, 1997. That the AKP came to power in 2002 may symbolize the end to this era. Nevertheless, the party leaders worked hard, long after 2002, to convince the military elite as well as the media and the NGOs of their adherence to democratic principles, to free market economy, to the EU process and more importantly to Atatürk's principles. In fact, Tayyip Erdoğan demonstrated his desire to be disassociated from his past political career in the RP by saying that "I remove the Milli Görüş

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[147] The leader of the reformist wing was Tayyip Erdoğan. Yet, since he was banned from politics at the time Abdullah Gül stepped forward as the reformist candidate.
[148] Fulya Atacan "Explaining Religious Politics at the Crossroad", 194.

shirt". This attitude of the party points out to the fact that the conditions of the February 28 process were still present after the AKP came to power in 2002. Therefore, I use another phrase, "the aftermath of February 28" to refer to a longer timespan which contains the period in which the Islamic political movement in Turkey reorganized under the conditions of the February 28 process. It is this longer process that this chapter deals with rather than the February 28 "postmodern" coup itself. Thus, I rely on the writings of regular Yeni Zemin authors from 1998 to 2005, ranging from books to newspaper columns and journal articles, for this chapter.

Contemporary literature on political Islam in Turkey mainly focuses on the behavioral and strategic changes in the political Islamic movement, particularly on the case of the AKP, during and after the February 28 process. Studies in this body of literature converge on the opinion that the AKP in particular and the Islamic political movement in Turkey in general have a more *moderate* position than the general political attitude of the movement before February 28. In this chapter, I analyze whether this behavioral/strategical shift is accompanied by ideological changes. I will elaborate on the impact of the February 28 process on the political thought of Yeni Zemin authors. Moreover, I will try to understand the repercussions of the maneuvers, strategies and attitudes of the political actors within the Islamic movement in Turkey. I will also shed light on the relationship between the political movement and Muslim intellectuals in the context of post-February 28.

This chapter will demonstrate that Muslim intellectuals' attitudes towards the political system in Turkey have been ambiguously moderated, parallel to the behavioral moderation within the political Islamic movement, despite traces of continuity in their discussions concerning the conception of the state and state-society-individual relations. The authors maintain their attitudes which advocate the priority of the individual and the society over the state with different

conceptual and theoretical adaptations in the aftermath of February 28. However, their reactions towards the AKP with the latter's accommodationist approach vis-à-vis the major institutions of the political system signify a change in Yeni Zemin authors' radical opposition to the system. In the rest of the chapter I will elaborate on this argument by analyzing the authors' conceptions of the state and how this conception is articulated in the authors' notions of democracy and approaches to the Kurdish problem.

IV.I.   The Political System and the State

The impact of the February 28 process on Muslim intellectuals is rather intricate and multifarious, displaying continuities as well as significant breaks with their erstwhile political line. An example of continuity in the Islamic thought during the February 28 process is Mehmet Metiner's conception of the state. In 1999, Metiner published the book *İdeolojik Devletten Demoktratik Devlete* (*From an Ideological State to a Democratic State*).[149] In this work, his first book since Yeni Zemin, Metiner re-asserts his definition of the state as a product of the social contract and continues his critique of the "sacralization of the state". "When you equip the state with religion, ideology and ethnic or sectarian identity" Metiner says, "you have to turn the state into a sacred entity".[150] Metiner believes, as in his articles in Yeni Zemin, that it is necessary to wipe any ideological element off from the organization of the state. For Metiner, if the legitimacy of the state is derived from an ideology or identity, the state cannot embrace everyone. Metiner's primary concern is to have a state for everyone and without an ideological background.

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[149] The book was re-published the book in 2004 under the title *Cennet Düşü* (A Dream of Heaven) and with additional notes on the changes during the first years of AKP rule and an additional chapter on the AKP phenomenon.

[150] Mehmet Metiner, *İdeolojik Devletten Demokrat Devlete*, (İstanbul: Beyan Yayınları, 1999), 45.

Metiner is aware of the fact that his readership mainly comprises people who have Islamic sensibilities. Therefore, although his conception of a neutral state is originally a liberal concept, he corroborates this state conception with Islamic references as well. According to Metiner, "Islam is not a culture nor is it an ideology. More importantly Islam is by no means a state religion. That Islam establishes general rules for the politics does not require us to reduce it to a state religion or an ideology".[151] In this way, Metiner tries to persuade his readership that it is not a religious prescription to have an "Islamic state". In fact the concept of an Islamic state is problematic for Metiner. A state ruled in accordance with the Islamic principles, as he points out, is better called a "state of Muslims" rather than an "Islamic state".

Thus, Metiner avoids ascribing a specific identity to the state. Even though the state is ruled by Muslims in line with their faith, the state itself must be "colorless", distant from all ideologies, religions and identities. Only in this way consecration of the state can be prevented. Metiner reminds once again that even "[the] 'state of Muslims' is by no means sacred".[152] The author's concern with an ideology-free state manifests itself in this differentiation between the "Islamic state" and the "state of Muslims". While the "Islamic state" signifies the classical Islamist ideology aiming at the top-down Islamization of the society, the "state of Muslims" refers to a polity where the state does not impose any ideology even though it is ruled in accordance with Islamic principles. Altan Tan allows us to better grasp Metiner's subtle distinction: "Muslims should not confuse their struggle live their authentic identity in the public sphere with a struggle to purge society of people with different opinions and to create a uniform human, as happened in the examples of Afghanistan and Iran (the laicists in Turkey are on the same path). Appearing in the public sphere without compromising from one's political identity is

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[151] Metiner, *İdeolojik Devletten Demokratik Devlete*, 159-60.
[152] Mehmet Metiner, *Cennet Düşü*, (İstanbul: Günizi, 2004), 188.

totally different than liquidating different identities".[153] The authors stress pluralism in the public space and criticize identity enforcement from above. Thus, for Muslim intellectuals, the Jacobin secularist implementations of the state in Turkey lead to a discourse against Jacobinism of any kind including the Islamist one. This discourse employs a comparison of Turkey with Iran and Afghanistan in addition to other authoritarian regimes frequently in this context of post-February 28.

While Metiner and Tan reconcile liberal thought with classical Islamic principles, Yalçın Akdoğan and Davut Dursun arrive at similar conceptions of the state inspired by the ideas of non-Turkish Muslim intellectuals, most notably Abdolkarim Souroush[154]. The distinction made by Souroush between the religion itself and the understanding of religion is particularly influential for these authors. For Souroush, religion is sacred; its only source is divine revelation. Therefore, everything in the religious domain is dogmatic and undisputable. However, understanding religion in different ways is possible since the understanding is subject to the socio-historical context.[155] Souroush argues that if knowledge of a concept or a practice can be reached through reasoning, i.e. without revelation, that concept or practice can be construed in accordance with the understanding of religion. The state belongs to this category. Thus, it is not directly a part of the religion; it is instead an accidental (*arızî*) component of religion. In other words, the organization of the state does not require knowledge through revelation. Akdoğan remarks that the reality of the state is, and has to be, a part of Muslims' everyday lives. In other words, the

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[153] Altan Tan, *2000'de Yeni Gündem*, "Ortadoğu Demokrasi ve İslam – II", 08.10.2000.

[154] Abdolkarim Souroush is an Iranian scholar known for his reformist thoughts. He writes extensively on comparative religion, politics, sociology and Islamic theology. Most notably, his intellectual ambition aims to reconcile faith and reason and to reinterpret the relationship between Islamic principles and individual liberties. See, Ahmad Sadri & Mahmoud Sadri, trans. and eds. *Reason, Freedom and Democracy in Islam*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

[155] Akdoğan co-edited a compilation of works of Souroush in Turkish. See Yalçın Akdoğan & Kenan Çamurcu, eds, *Modern Durum ve Dini Bilginin Evrimi: Abdülkerim Süruş*, (İstanbul: Pendik Belediyesi Kültür Yayınları, 1995).

state cannot be sacred for it is not a primary component of Islam. It is a political organization that people must have the opportunity to shape and re-shape in line with their aspirations.[156]

Although there is no significant change in the authors' conception of the state, they have acquired novel concepts for their discussions on the state. The most prominent ones in these discussions are the rule of law and the accountability of the state. Limitation of the public sphere and expansion of the civil societal domain, the main aspirations of Yeni Zemin authors, are girded with more demands in the same direction to establish the supremacy of the rule of law and transparency as well as to stop arbitrariness. For example, Abdurrahman Dilipak states that "the founding principle of the state must be that it is *participatory*, *pluralistic*, *transparent*, *accountable*, and *governable*. The state must follow the law in all circumstances. *Justice*, *peace*, *freedom* and *human rights* are the *sine qua non* conditions of the *rule of law*".[157] Note that some of these values highlighted by Dilipak in particular pluralism, participation, justice and accountability were part of the critique of the state in Yeni Zemin. While the first two pointed out to the exclusion of the Islamic segments from politics, justice and accountability were employed to draw attention to the economic inequalities and political corruption during the 1990s. After the experience of February 28, Muslim intellectuals incorporate transparency, human rights and the rule of law to their critical discourse.

Hence, the February 28 process brought along a need to reformulate the Islamist critique of the state which was mainly based on demands for democratization, pluralism and larger civil society during the 1990s, as in the case of Yeni Zemin. This re-formulation around the concepts of the rule of law, transparency and government accountability does not indicate a radical shift in

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[156] Yalçın Akdoğan, *Hayatı ve Siyaseti Düşünmek: Türkiye'nin Siyasal Durumu ve Zor Zamanda Yaşamak*, (İstanbul: Şehir Yayınları, 2000), 25.

[157] Abdurrahman Dilipak & Şanar Yurdatapan, *Ortak Payda: Yeşil-Kırmızı, Kırmızı-Yeşil Denemeler*, (Istanbul: İnkılap, 2004), 66. Italics original.

Muslim intellectuals' conception of the state. In fact, we observe reflections of this trend among the popular sectors of the Islamic movement ever since the 1990s. While democratic values and the rhetoric of human rights reign supreme following the end of the Cold War, Islamic demands such as freedom to wear the headscarf have been presented in the framework of freedom of faith and religion, civil liberties and/or human rights.[158] This trend reached an apex during the February 28 process. Davut Dursun demonstrates the impact of February 28 on the Islamic movement in Turkey:

> For me, the most striking features of February 28 are "arbitrariness", "enforcement" and "tension" (*keyfilik, dayatmacılık ve gerginlik*) in all spheres of government. If you ask which one is more devastating in terms of its outcome, I say, without hesitation, 'arbitrariness'. And I would like to point out to the devastation and harm created by unlawfulness which will become a pile of irretrievable problems in the near future.[159]

Note that Dursun does not prioritize the enforcement or imposition of Kemalist principles such as laicism and nationalism but he underscores his discontent with arbitrary rule of the government. His remarks echo with ideas of Akdoğan and Dilipak on the necessity to change the state's role from an arbitrator to a regulator and to have a minimal state.

Another significant continuity in Muslim intellectuals' conception of the state is the ideal of a minimal state. In this sense, the affinity between Yeni Zemin authors and (neo) liberal theories of the state carries on in the aftermath of February 28. Altan Tan, who appears as the most loyal exponents of the "discourse of change" in accordance with the so called New World Order, argues that Turkey still has two alternatives:

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[158] Nuray Mert, "Türkiye İslamcılığı'na Tarihsel Bir Bakış", 411-419. Note that there was no consensus on presenting the hijab or other sanctions of Islam in a liberal framework. The dominant opinion among Muslim intellectuals was to make people sure that hijab is made mandatory for Muslims by Allah. On the other hand, performing religious duties in accordance with one's faith is considered within the realm of civil right and liberties. For example, see Ali Bulaç, "Başörtüsü: Çözümler, Sorular, Yeni Perspektifler", *Umran*, Vol. 129, (May 2005), 33-38.
[159] Davut Dursun, "28 Şubat Üçüncü Yaşında", *Yeni Şafak*, 01.03.1999.

> 1- Becoming an economically and politically transparent, democratic and professional state which guarantees all the rights and liberties including freedom of faith and belief and rights for ethnic identities; or 2- Staying as a fossilized third world country (*çağın gerisinde kalmış bir üçüncü dünya ülkesi*) where businesses conducted higgledy-piggledy (*işlerin karman çorman yürütüldüğü*) and gangs and rentier reigns supreme. The people certainly prefer a humanely livable, democratic Turkey.[160]

The close link Tan establishes between a liberal democratic political regime and economic development derives its legitimacy from liberal intellectual tradition. Thus, for Tan and like-minded intellectuals the main ideological impulses of the post-Cold War context, e.g. the concept of human rights and the link between political liberalism and economic development, still the back-bone of their (post) Islamist critique of the political system in Turkey.

Furthermore, the timid and at times apologist tone in Yeni Zemin for the magazine's overall pro-democratic stance gives way to a more salient and strong defense of democracy, civil society and pluralism in Metiner's books after Yeni Zemin. Metiner believes that the February 28 process proved that the democratization of the Islamic movement in Turkey, advocated by himself and other Yeni Zemin authors since the early 1990s, is the only viable option of Islamic political movement in Turkey. He reminds his position as the political counsellor of the FP's leader in designating the pro-democratic, pro-liberal and pro-EU discourse of the party. According to Metiner, Erdoğan and other founders of the AKP did not oppose this new discourse; the disagreement between Erdoğan-led reformists and Erbakan-led conservatives was about the organization of the party and its political tactics. Metiner reports that Recep Tayyip Erdoğan believed in the necessity to re-situate the party in the political spectrum by bringing in new politicians from the old center-right parties. Erdoğan also envisioned a more accommodationist approach towards the military and other important actors of the socio-political

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[160] Altan Tan, *2000'de Yeni Gündem*, "Demokrasi Hareketi", 10.06.2000.

system in Turkey than the attitude of Milli Görüş leadership. However, Erbakan's disagreement with Erdoğan's project expedited the split in Milli Görüş.[161]

For Mehmet Metiner, the AKP had become a political platform with not only the potential but also the will necessary to democratize the existing political system in Turkey. So much so that Metiner adds an annotation to a part of the book *Cennet Düşü* published in Yeni Zemin as an article entitled "Değişmeden İlerlemek" ["Progress without Change"]. In the original article Metiner stated that Turkey has been trying to make progress without modifying its political system in accordance with the social realities of Turkey and global conditions.[162] In 2004, Metiner changes his opinion after the AKP's stubborn policies towards EU membership. He maintains that Turkey has started to reform its political system through the AKP reforms to harmonize with the EU.[163]

One of the most dramatic impacts of the February 28 process on Islamic political thought in Turkey is the changing attitude towards the EU and Turkey's EU accession process. An important reason for this change is the conviction that the EU harmonization process is the only possible way to stop the Kemalist bureaucratic tutelage and rigid implementation of secularism which exclude the Islamic segments of the society politically, economically and socially. In fact, Mehmet Metiner believes that the "sphere of liberties" (*özgürlükler alanı*) is enlarging with the EU harmonization process and its further enlargement is only possible through this process.[164] The authors' remarks on social segments which oppose Turkey's EU accession clearly reveal their expectations from the EU harmonization process. For Ali Bulaç, "[t]here is the desire to

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[161] Metiner, *Yemyeşil Şeriat Bembeyaz Demokrasi*, 550.
[162] Although Metiner does not explicitly states which realities and conditions he refers to here, he features the rising Islamic political identity and the integration of Islamic segments to social life in Turkey, as well as the ideological climate the post-Cold War elsewhere in his book.
[163] Metiner, *Cennet Düşü*, 136.
[164] Mehmet Metiner, *Cennet Düşü*, 56-57.

protect the *status quo* behind the 'innocent excuses' (*masum gerekçeler*) of the segments which object to Turkey's EU membership".[165] The "status quo" refers to the undemocratic, modernist and rigidly laicist political system that has excluded Muslims socially since the 1920s according to Yeni Zemin authors. The "status quo" and its guardians are often demonized by Muslim intellectuals. Thus, while Bulaç presents the EU as the agent of the consecrated "change", he portrays those who oppose the EU as the guardians of the *status quo* or centrist forces, as phrased Yeni Zemin.

The changing attitude towards the EU runs parallel to the authors' attitude towards the AKP which put the EU membership of Turkey at the top of its agenda after 2001. More importantly authors' enthusiasm for the AKP stems from the party's ability to incorporate different social segments that were thought to be the "aspirants of change" in Yeni Zemin, i.e. (devout) Muslims, Kurds, Anatolian businessmen, urban poor and liberal intellectuals, into its political project. However, the AKP also accommodates with the social sectors that are characterized as "centrist forces" in Yeni Zemin, namely military-bureaucratic elite, media and Istanbul-based big industrialists. The party officials declared that they gave up their confrontational strategy and they have adopted an accommodationist position. It is interesting that while the AKP tries to represent different social groups demanding a change, the party choose not to confront with pro-status quo social sectors. Hence, the AKP seems to maintain an ambivalent position unless the party tries to reconcile the interests of both groups.

The AKP officials constantly attempt to convince the military-bureaucratic elite and the media for the party's adherence to the principles of the Republic and its pro-democracy, pro-free

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[165] Ali Bulaç, *Avrupa Birliği ve Türkiye*, (İstanbul: Eylül, 2000), 13. Italics added.

market and pro-EU stance with its new cadres, outlook and discourse.[166] Note that similar accommodationist strategies of the RP during the 1990s created discontent among Yeni Zemin authors including Mehmet Metiner, Altan Tan and Ali Bulaç. Thus, it is interesting that the AKP's accommodationist position does not evoke adverse opinions regarding the party among Muslim intellectuals; given that the ambition of Yeni Zemin authors was to transform the political system in Turkey altogether, not to moderate the Islamic movement in line with the system.

The changing reactions may indicate that Muslim intellectuals moderate their position vis-à-vis the political system in Turkey as did the ex-RP members of the AKP. However, in the light of above discussion, most of the authors have not changed their conceptions of the state radically. Rather, they re-articulate their critique of the state and/or political system in Turkey by using a variety of new concepts. On the other hand, with the exceptions of Ümit Aktaş and Altan Tan, Muslim intellectuals discussed in this chapter do not respond to the AKP's reconciliatory approach which transpires in the party's self-proclaimed center-right position in the booklet *Muhafazakar Demokrasi* [*Conservative Democracy*] written by Yalçın Akdoğan. The overall political attitude in Yeni Zemin saliently differs from the political position of the AKP for mainly three reasons: First, a party which for electoral purposes locates itself in the center of the political system could not have been considered to be a remedy for the problems of Turkey since the major problem of the country for Yeni Zemin authors was the political system itself.

Second, "conservative" is an inappropriate epithet to describe either the Islamist ideology in Yeni Zemin or the demands for democratization of the political system in Turkey. Yalçın

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[166] Sefa Şimşek, "Conservative Democracy as a Cosmetic Image in Turkish Politics: The Semiology of AKP's Political Identity", *Turkish Studies*, 14:3, (2013), 430-431.

Akdoğan explains the party's political identity, conservative democracy, as a political attitude that "stands against revolutionary transformations and supports evolutionary/gradual change".[167] Thus, the conservatism that Akdoğan formulates breaks off the main political attitude of Yeni Zemin authors who urge for a wholesale systemic change once and for all. Third, the democracy that Akdoğan refers to is not the same concept as maintained in Yeni Zemin. Especially the expectations of democratization in Akdoğan's new discourse radically differ from the discourse in Yeni Zemin. According to Akdoğan "fortifying the democratic regime enables the peaceful coexistence of diversities within the society, reconciliation of the state with the nation and *restoration* of the worn-out system".[168] Akdoğan defines democracy as a factor that is going to restore the system, instead of transforming it. In other words, the passage suggests that the AKP does not aim at reforming the political system, let alone changing it altogether.

Note that Mehmet Metiner confidently asserted in Yeni Zemin that the demands of change Yeni Zemin authors voiced did not aim to restore the system. Metiner envisioned that the democratization process would bring along an entirely new political system to Turkey. Thus, bearing in mind the enthusiasm for the AKP, Yeni Zemin authors' debates on democracy in the aftermath of February 28 can enable the understanding of the peculiarity in Muslim intellectuals' stance vis-à-vis the political system in this period. In the following section I will discuss the author's notion of democracy in relation to their critique of the state to elaborate on the impact of February 28 process on Yeni Zemin authors.

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[167] Yalçın Akdoğan, *Ak Parti ve Muhafazakar Demokrasi*, (Alfa: İstanbul, 2004), 9.
[168] Ibid, 82.

IV.II. Democracy and Democratic Mechanisms

Yeni Zemin was a platform within which Muslim intellectuals started expressing their conviction that the democratization of the socio-political structure is essential, if not inevitable, for Turkey. It is important to note that both Mehmet Metiner[169] and Yalçın Akdoğan[170] independently remember the magazine as a precursor of the democratization demands after a decade of its last publication. In retrospect, both authors proudly underscore the significance of their enterprise for reconfiguration of the Islamic political movement in Turkey. However, this notion of democratizing the system was not consensual among Yeni Zemin authors. In the mid-1990s, democracy was still an alien concept to an important number of Yeni Zemin authors as well as to their readers.[171] Certain sections of the Islamic movement were suspicious of or hostile to democratization demands of authors like Mehmet Metiner, Altan Tan, Ümit Aktaş and Abdurrahman Dilipak. The February 28 process unveiled the disagreement among Muslim intellectuals about democracy. As Metiner indicates,

> the division within the political Islamic movement [in Turkey] has started long ago. No doubt, the February 28 process made this division within the political Islamic movement more apparent. It [February 28] gave a shape in flesh and bones [to the division among Islamists]. In a way, it enabled our political Islamists to discover democracy as a result of a common victimization [of religious sectors in Turkey].[172]

Thus, February 28 not only revealed the tension among Islamists but also changed the course of the political Islamic movement in the favor of the pro-democratic camp led notably by Mehmet

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[169] See Mehmet Metiner, *Yemyeşil Şeriat Bembeyaz Demokrasi*, (Doğan: İstanbul, 2004).

[170] See Faruk Bildirici's interview with Akdoğan for his intellectual and political career, *Hürriyet*, "Başbakan gündemi değiştirmek için polemik başlatabiliyor", 02.05.2010.

[171] Metiner states that "when we articulated our [democratization] demands [in Yeni Zemin], I was accused of following an 'americanist Islamism' [*amerikancı İslamcılık*] by radical Islamists and of being a renegade by the pro-RP media. See, Metiner, *Yemyeşil Şeriat Bembeyaz Demokrasi*, 458. See also the footnote 115 in the previous chapter.

[172] Metiner, *Cennet Düşü*, 16.

Metiner. After February 28, the Islamists who used to be hostile to the notion of democracy came to agree that democratization of the system was the only condition for the survival of the Islamic movements in Turkey. Under the conditions of February 28, Metiner seems more confident in his call for democratization in Turkey compared to his apologist tone in the editorial pages of Yeni Zemin.

In this context, Metiner's stress on democracy and his tone in his writings calling for democratization in Turkey has become much more direct and profound during the aftermath of February 28. Compared to his Yeni Zemin writings, Metiner's discussion of the notion of democracy in the aforementioned books appears clearer, less encumbered. First, he tries to resolve the standing confusion in Yeni Zemin regarding the nature of democracy –whether it is a political method, a technique of rule rather a worldview, an ideology:

> There are two approaches to democracy; one is old, one is new. According to the first, democracy is a philosophy of the rebellion against the divine will, more than being a regime or a technique of rule. In other words, it is a positivistic/secular ideology as a product of the Enlightenment… Positivist/secularist elites who put democracy in such an ideological framework declare that religion and democracy are and will never be compatible.[173]

In other words, if democracy is considered to be a system of values born in modern Europe, it becomes an alternative to Islam, or any other religion and ideology. If we define democracy in this way, we admit that a person cannot be a Muslim and a democrat at the same time. However, says Metiner, there is a new paradigm asserting that democracy is before anything else a technique, a method of rule. Thus, it is not an ideology or a lifestyle that is to be imposed upon others. This is the understanding of democracy which Metiner claims to be defending.

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[173] Ibid., 6.

These two competing notions of democracy determined the main line of conflict among Yeni Zemin authors. Rasim Özdenören, for instance, stated in various articles in Yeni Zemin that democracy cannot be considered apart from the social and historical conditions of Western European societies within which the concept emerged. Özdenören maintains his position after February 28. He asserts that "to say that Islam does not have a point of contact with democracy does not mean that the former envisions a despotic governmental regime. There are two different systems with different value judgements, legal regulations and most importantly sources of legitimacy".[174] Özdenören re-affirms that the pro-democratic voices within the Islamic movement result from the popularity of liberal democratic discourse and its hegemony in the post-Cold War context. Democracy is thought to consist of popular elections, the establishment of human rights and liberties and the prevention of the dictatorship of majority; "yet" says Özdenören, "we disregard the necessity of democracy's defense mechanisms against interferences which are equally, if not more, important as those [principles]".[175] He explains these defense mechanisms as the ways people react to any possible threat against the pillars of democracy such as free and fair elections and civil rights and liberties. These mechanisms have emerged *ipso facto* in the class-based conflicts that have dominated Western European societies and are absent in Muslim societies in general and Turkey in particular according to the author.

It is possible to identify a shift in Ali Bulaç's attitude towards the notion of democracy from a critical position to a lenient one. Bulaç was not a committed supporter of democracy during his Yeni Zemin years. He was highly critical of the concept itself as well as Muslim's participation in democratic processes through political parties and elections. In the aftermath of February 28, Bulaç speaks more favorably of democracy and democratization. Just like Mehmet

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[174] Rasim Özdenören, "Bir Demokrasi Türü: Seçim Demokrasisi", *Umran*, Vol. 98, (October 2002), 32.
[175] Ibid.

Metiner, he unpacks the different meanings possibly attributable to democracy: "…democracy is not a philosophy or a world-view or a life-style; and it should not be presented as if it was one of these. If it was so … a single philosophy, a single opinion and a single lifestyle would be imposed in democratic regimes. …democracy emerges as a political technique, a regime of government and it does not have any meaning beyond this political framework".[176] Departing from his attitude in Yeni Zemin, Bulaç does not immediately associate democracy to its philosophical and cultural references. Thus, he points out to the opinion that there is no reason for Islamic societies not to embrace democracy. Although Bulaç is still cautious for climbing on the bandwagon to reconcile Islam with democracy, his new position suggests that he abandons his skeptical views about democracy we observed in Yeni Zemin.

Consequently, although authors' articulation of the concept may be different in the aftermath of February 28, demands of democracy become a common denominator for Yeni Zemin authors. The state's persecution of Islamic movements, religious communities and visibility of religion, as in the case of the headscarf issue, had brought the instrumental importance of democracy into prominence. Devout Muslims realized that solidifying the democracy may shield against state repression and imposition of Kemalist principles in everyday lives. Thus, the experience of February 28 intensified the identification of freedom with freedom for religion and religious activities. Davut Dursun's reaction to the case of Merve Kavakçı[177] is an example this attitude:

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[176] Ali Bulaç, "Demokrasi", *Zaman*, 26.04.1998

[177] Merve Kavakçı was elected to the parliament from Istanbul as a deputy of the FP in 1999 General Elections. She wore a headscarf when she came to the first meeting of the parliament to take oath. Her headscarf caused harsh reactions from deputies of other parties in the parliament. She was precluded from taking the oath and she was forced to leave the meeting. See "World: Middle East Headscarf ignites Iran-Turkey row", *BBC.com*. last modified 11.05.1999, accessed: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/341222.stm

Ecevit's phrase[178] suggests that the state is above the parliament. He implies that the state has rules and regulations of its own; and these rules and regulations must be implemented in the parliament. Nevertheless, in democratic societies parliaments, formed by the representatives of the people, are above all the institutions; and states are structured through regulations of parliaments. The parliament may appear to be a state institution but it is in fact an institutional body of people's will, not a body of state. The state does not regulate the parliament; the parliament regulates the state and tries state to abide by the rules put by the parliament. It is for this reason that its name is TBMM (Grand *National* Assembly of Turkey). It is not Grand State Assembly of Turkey.[179]

Dursun makes a distinction between the state as bureaucratic machinery and the parliament as the institutional body of people's representatives. In other words, the parliament belongs to the civil domain in contrast to the other institutions belonging to the political domain. Dursun implicitly posits the headscarf as part of the civil domain and criticizes the intervention of the political domain to the MP wearing a headscarf in the parliament Therefore, the persecution process after February 28 military intervention cemented the support for democracy and democratization among different constituencies of Islamic political movement in Turkey. Meanwhile, the opposition to democracy severely weakened, if not disappeared entirely.

IV.II.I. Democracy: How?

Despite the self-confidence of the authors who postulate democratization as the only viable option for the Islamic political movement in Turkey, they adjust their discourse as democracy becomes a means for the Islamic movement to gain acceptance by the political system. Democratization in Yeni Zemin was conceptualized as purging Kemalism and representing the people's will at all the levels of government. However, because of the pressure from the military-bureaucratic elite, the media and the major trade unions, the people's will that carried the RP and

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[178] Following the event, then-PM Bülent Ecevit said "this place [the parliament, TBMM] is the most sublime institution of the state. No one shall come here as s/he pleases".

[179] Davut Dursun, "Türkiye neyi tartışıyor?", *Yeni Şafak*, 07.05.1999.

AKP to power in 1995 and 2002, respectively, did not allow these parties to transform the political system in Turkey in accordance with the expectations of the social segments that supported them. Thus, the exercise of power does not necessarily mean that the base of the governing party can freely practice the prescriptions of their religion or ideology. For instance, the political parties that are supported by the Islamic sectors of the society could not remove the ban on headscarf in public spaces in their terms of government until the late 2000s. In this context, concepts and values related to democracy such as human rights and civil liberties gain specific importance. Through utilizing these concepts Muslims have tried to avoid the repression of militant secularism in Turkey which did not allow the visibility of religion in public life.

Thus, according to Muslim intellectuals regular popular elections do not indicate that democracy in Turkey is properly functioning. For example, Mehmet Metiner is extremely careful not to reduce democracy to the mere electoral process. On the contrary, Metiner strictly and repeatedly emphasizes the centrality of human rights and civic freedoms in democratic systems. He puts forth that "[d]emocracy stands as a wide-ranging concept which includes human rights… Everyone has to understand now that democracy is not merely formal elections… Democracy is a totality; human rights and liberties are important parts of this totality".[180] In this respect, Metiner problematizes a statement made by Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan starting with the "adultery debate".[181] Erdoğan, addressing EU criticism of Turkey's criminalization of adultery, said "We are Turkey! We are Turks! We don't let others interfere in our domestic affairs".

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[180] Metiner, *İdeolojik Devletten Demokratik Devlete*, 59.
[181] In 2004, the parliament amended the penal code in accordance with the EU standards. During the negotiation process, the government made a proposal to criminalize adultery in the new penal code. However, the proposal strained Turkey's EU relations following tense statements by both sides. After the meeting between PM Tayyip Erdoğan and European Commissioner for Enlargement Gunther Verheugen in Brussels, the problem is resolved and the parliament enacted the new penal code without any regulation about adultery. See "TBMM'de 2004 böyle geçti…", *Milliyet.com.tr*, last modified 27.12.2004, accessed: http://www.milliyet.com.tr/2004/12/27/son/sonsiy06.html

Metiner sees this statement as a "misfortune" for Erdoğan's reputation. He also thinks that this statement conflicts with modern democratic sensibilities.[182] Metiner's reaction demonstrates his commitment to the liberal democratic values even though it involves a criticism of the AKP and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan.

In addition to human rights, Yeni Zemin authors think that political and cultural pluralism and civil liberties are the *sine qua non* conditions for democracy in the aftermath of February 28. For instance, according to Yalçın Akdoğan,

> Pluralism that contains liberties and tolerance requires people to have a say in government properly. From the smallest organizations like associations, clubs to the largest ones like political parties, representing the will of individuals to the government and criticizing and monitoring the government require the existence of liberties and rights. The lack of these values in institutions and rules indicates the failure of democracy in an environment where individuals are not able to express their opinions, realize different projects, organize in accord with their faiths, and use criticism and communication channels.[183]

Akdoğan delineates the limits of representative democracy by stressing the vitality of political participation at all the levels of political organizations. Thus, as Davut Dursun directly refers toward the end of his 2001 book *Demokrasi Sorunu ve Türk Demokrasisi* [Democracy Problem and Turkish Democracy], it is possible to observe that "radical democracy" debates found correspondences among Muslim intellectuals through their experience of the limitations of electoral politics.

The most salient difference in this period, nonetheless, is a stronger antagonism between democratic and bureaucratic institutions. The authors consider a clash between them since democratic institutions consist of the representatives of the people and therefore they act in

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[182] Metiner, *Cennet Düşü* 59.
[183] Akdoğan, *Hayatı ve Siyaseti Düşünmek*, 45.

accordance with the demands of popular masses which are antagonistic to the interests of the appointed, as opposed to elected, military-bureaucratic elite. Thus, democratic institutions such as the parliament are conceptualized as the "legitimate actors of the political domain"; and the bureaucratic institutions, such as the military and higher judicial bodies, are seen as the guardians of the tutelary regime. Davut Dursun defines the encroachments into the civil political domain thorough military interventions and bureaucratic barriers as a "restriction of the domain of politics". He explains the concept as follows: "We mean, by restriction of the domain of politics, that transfer of duties normally undertaken by representatives of the people and institutions formed by those representatives to appointed officials who do not qualify to represent the people and institutions formed by those officials –the erosion of authority of the representative bodies in time". It is again important to note the impact of the experiences of the February 28 process in emphasizing this antagonism. The February 28 process was marked by the military intervention that forced the elected government to resign, the Constitutional Court decisions to shut down the RP and FP and the persecution of the leaders of the parties as well as other implementations to the detriment of the Islamic sectors in Turkey.

Ümit Aktaş gives an example of this process from the government's practices during the February 28 process:

> the verdict in Tayyip Erdoğan's case ensures the civil and military elite's privilege of doing politics. Criticism to this verdict is silenced in the name of the "respect of adjudication" or the "independence of judiciary". Deniz Baykal even said that "the sword of justice has no scabbard" [*şeriatın kestiği parmak acımaz*]. However, this [criticism] is a natural and reasonable fact in democratic countries. Countries where criticizing adjudications and judiciary is impossible are dominated by dictatorial governments.[184]

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[184] Ümit Aktaş, "Devlet Partisi, Cumhuriyet ve İslami Hareketin Yeni Yönelimi", *Birikim* Vol. 115, (November 1998), 76.

Aktaş voices Muslim intellectuals' critique of extra-political interventions to civil politics. According to most Yeni Zemin authors, the military and judiciary elite restrict the authority of democratic institutions such as the parliament and the cabinet when they see fit. Constitutional organs like the National Security Council and the Constitutional Court usurp the power of elected politicians. Moreover, Yeni Zemin authors point out to the fact that the civil or military bureaucracy do not function transparently; therefore they are not held politically accountable.

Besides the problem of transparency, the undemocratic structure of political organizations is another obstacle for democratization in Turkey for Yeni Zemin authors. This undemocratic structure poses the threat of a possible unlimited government and single-handed intensification of power. Both in 1999 and 2004, Mehmet Metiner stresses the importance of a democratic legal framework for political parties. He believes that democracy should start with democratic party structures. "No doubt", he says, "democracy is not a regime of 'elected dictators'".[185] This approach suggests that he and like-minded Muslim intellectuals are critical of the concentration of power in a single hand. In the same vein, Akdoğan highlights the principle of "limited government" in conservative and democratic political traditions he proposes as the pillars of the AKP's political orientation.[186] Furthermore, Davut Dursun's concerns about the popular election of the president (*cumhurbaşkanı*) reflect a similarly critical attitude towards a possible intensification of power. Dursun writes:

> It is understood that there is a severe strategic mistake in demanding popular elections for the president. The Virtue Party expressed this demand most profoundly. However, it is apparent that no one considers how the parliamentary system works if the president is elected by popular vote while the current governmental system remains the same. Who will deal with a popularly elected president and how, considering that

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[185] Metiner, *Cennet Düşü*, 73.
[186] Akdoğan, *Muhafazakar Demokrasi*, 27.

> problems occur between the government and the president even in the present circumstance in which the president is elected by the [members of] parliament?[187]

Dursun is obviously in favor of a system in which the power of the executive body is limited. Since the president is endowed with executive powers by the 1982 Constitution, Dursun has concerns about the authority of a president who has a greater popular legitimacy. According to Dursun, since the president cannot be held accountable for his/her actions a popularly elected "powerful president" poses serious problems for the democratic regime.

IV.II.II. Democracy, Islam and Radicalism

It is apparent that debates over democracy are marked by the experiences of the Islamic movement during the February 28 process. While democratization was promoted as a cure to the ills of Turkey, most of the intellectuals highlight the aspects that touch upon the problems of the constituencies of the Islamic movement in Turkey. In other words, authors who suggest democracy as the only viable solution to the problems of the Islamic political movement stress the pragmatic significance of democracy. This discursive shift after February 28 is accompanied by a fully-fledged submission to democracy as a political regime, as in the case of Mehmet Metiner, or by lenience towards the concept, as in the case of Ali Bulaç. Thus, critical investigation of the implications of democratic regime and democratization most authors engaged in during the 1990s has almost disappeared.

In Yeni Zemin, democracy was considered as a system to be questioned and utilized from an Islamic point of view. Authors such as Ali Bulaç and Ümit Aktaş sought ways to transcend democracy by appealing to Islamic sources to correct what they perceived to be the system's shortcomings. Yet, to a large extent, it became immune to this critical investigation in the

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[187] Davut Dursun, "Cumhurbaşkanını Halk Değil Meclis Seçmeli", *Yeni Şafak*, 04.01.2000.

aftermath of February 28. Nevertheless, Ümit Aktaş, who fully supported democracy in Yeni Zemin, criticizes Muslim intellectuals' acquiescing of democracy. According to him, "[i]t is true that democracy is a step forward towards the hope for liberation of our country; but, after all that has been said about it, could we agree that democracy is the final step? Shall we ignore the fact that democracy created deadlocks; representation produces new relations of tutelage; it [democracy] eventually bestows rightfulness to the strong and leaves minorities unprotected".[188] Aktaş expresses his disappointment with the evasion of a critical attitude among Islamic circles. For him, demands for democracy and democratization turned into dissimulation (*takiyye*) as Muslim intellectuals abuse the instrumental value of democracy by leaving their critical stance towards the concept aside.

Taking the authors' different positions regarding democracy into consideration, we can say that the concept is still a matter of dispute among Muslim intellectuals in the aftermath of February 28. Nevertheless, the conflicting parties of this dispute as well as the baseline of the conflict have changed. The main conflict was between those who supported democracy and those who opposed it. As of the aftermath of February 28, there are three lines of division: a first group of intellectuals ultimately embrace democracy. As in the cases of Yalçın Akdoğan and to a certain extent Mehmet Metiner, democracy is not a part of the critique of the system by socially excluded Muslims anymore. It rather becomes an instrument of integration into the system in the early 2000s. The second front, best represented by Ali Bulaç and Rasim Özdenören, has reservations about democracy at the theoretical level. Yet, they take a highly pragmatic stance towards democracy as an applied governmental regime in Turkey to the extent that the Islamic sectors avail themselves of democracy. The third front shows a negative attitude to both uncritical

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[188] Ümit Aktaş, "Ütopya'nın Çöküşü", *Birikim*, Vol. 139, (November, 2000), 122.

and pragmatic endorsements of democracy. For example, Ümit Aktaş still insists on his opinion that democracy is an imperfect political system which should remain as an auxiliary instrument of the Islamist critique of Turkey's political system.

Consequently, with the exception of Ümit Aktaş, Muslim intellectuals become more lenient towards democracy. This trend in Muslim intellectuals' political thought after February 28 indicates that ideological moderation has accompanied the Islamic movement's behavioral moderation. However, the dynamics of transformation within the Islamic movement is much more complex than the unilinear change envisaged in conventional understandings of the moderation theory. On the one hand, the adoption of democratic concepts and values into the Islamic political thought of the 1990s makes the shift from the RP to the FP having a distinguished pluralist, pro-democratic and pro-EU orientation compared to the former. On the other hand, as stated in the previous chapter this adoption does not forthrightly demonstrate an ideological moderation within the Islamic movement in Turkey. Rather, Muslim intellectuals developed a particular discourse through which they express their critique of the existing political system by incorporating democratic concepts and values to their Islamic worldview. It is certain that he AKP cadres heavily relied on this discourse to develop their political agenda and self-proclaimed ideological orientation. Yet, they utilized this discourse by undermining its inherently anti-systemic tendencies to secure their position within the existing political system. Thus, the debate around democracy indicates that moderation in the Islamic movement in Turkey after February 28 is rather convoluted.

Evidently, the moderate stance of the AKP also made an impact on Muslim intellectuals' ideological orientations under the conditions of the February 28 process. The changing attitude towards the EU and the meaning attributed to the EU accession process is a case in point. A more

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important signifier of ideological moderation is Muslim intellectuals' devotion to democracy without a critical discussion of the concept from an Islamic point of view. The next part of this chapter will discuss the authors' deliberations about the Kurdish question. This discussion further explicates the attitude towards the state in the aftermath of February 28 as it is the theme through which Muslim intellectuals articulate their concrete suggestions for changing the existing political system in Turkey.

IV.III.   The Kurdish Question and the Administrative Structure

In the aftermath of February 28, with the notable exceptions of Mehmet Metiner and Altan Tan who devoted much of their work to the Kurdish question, Yeni Zemin authors rarely engage in discussions on the issue. There are two important reasons for this lack of interest: first, while Yeni Zemin was a platform which invited authors to write on the issue extensively, it seems that the Kurdish question is not as central as it was in Yeni Zemin in the authors' agenda. This does not suggest that Muslim intellectuals show no interest at all about the issue; but rather the authors touch upon the Kurdish question only as long as it is related to their intellectual priorities. Second, it appears that the authors incline to contemplate more on the problems of the Islamic social sectors and the strategies of the political Islamic movement in Turkey in the aftermath of February 28. In other words, Muslim intellectuals put the other general problems of Turkey such as the Kurdish question into the backdrop. Therefore, I will rely mostly on the writings of Mehmet Metiner and Altan Tan for this section.

After February 28, Mehmet Metiner, who had a particular interest in the Kurdish political movement outside Turkey during Yeni Zemin years, still insists on his argument that the Kurdish question is not unique to Turkey; but rather it is a regional problem. His approach implies the

inadequacy of reducing the problem to terrorism which is supposedly a means of Western powers to weaken Turkey from outside according to a conspiracy theory expressed usually by right and left nationalists. Thus, according to Metiner, reducing the Kurdish question to a terror problem is a univalent, incorrect and insufficient approach that leads to a deadlock for the problem."[189] On the other hand, Altan Tan criticizes the reduction of the Kurdish question to a simple economic problem stemming from the regional backwardness and local feudal social structure.[190]. Without denying the role of relative underdevelopment of the Southeastern Anatolian region, where the majority of Kurdish population in Turkey lives, the authors define the Kurdish question as an identity problem as the cultural rights of a certain ethnic group are not recognized. Terror is only the end result of the first two problems.[191]

Similar to what he proposed in Yeni Zemin, Mehmet Metiner asserts the necessity of legally guaranteeing the cultural rights of the Kurds. He argues for establishing the concept of "constitutional citizenship" (*anayasal yurttaşlık*) referring to a territorial citizenship and free of any ethnic affiliation. Metiner speaks highly of Tayyip Erdoğan's statement about constitutional citizenship and "*Türkiyelilik*"[192] which runs, or so Metiner thinks, parallel to his own arguments. Together with the expansion of democratic rights during the accession process to the EU, he emphasizes the political climate created by the AKP government which allows for open discussion of the Kurdish problem. However, Metiner thinks that concrete steps towards a

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[189] Metiner, *İdeolojik Devletten Demokratik Devlete*, 107.
[190] Altan Tan, *2000'de Yeni Gündem*, "'Terörün siyasallaşması' ve 'Kürtler ne istiyor?'", 17.06.2000.
[191] Metiner, ibid.
[192] *Türkiyeli* means "from Turkey". As such, it features the territorial attachment and, unlike Turkish, it does not directly bear connotation to an ethnic identity. Thus, *Türkiyeli* was suggested as an umbrella concept which is thought to reflect the multi-cultural and multi-ethnic social structure in Turkey better than *Turkish*. The concept has become a public controversy in when it was firs articulated in 2004. See Murat Somer, "Defensive- vs. liberal nationalist perspectives on diversity and the Kurdish conflict: Europeanization, the internal debate, and Türkiyelilik", *New Perspectives on Turkey*, No: 32 (2005), 73-91.

democratic solution, for instance the formation of a public TV channel in Kurdish (TRT Şeş), are all positive but not sufficient at all.

The discussions of the Kurdish question frequently revolve around the cultural and political rights of the Kurds. Altan Tan and Mehmet Metiner draw the attention to the political aspect of the Kurdish question rather than the national security problem posed by the PKK and other armed organizations and activities. Altan Tan often criticizes the military-bureaucratic elite which, he argues, become restive by concepts such as Kurdish identity, Kurdish language, education in Kurdish, democratic reforms. For him the main problem is the mentality that identifies the political struggle for these rights, concepts and reforms as treason and obstructs political channels for a solution.[193] According to Metiner, "deferring the democratic means to solve the problem by saying that 'the terror must end first' is a dangerous approach".[194] Metiner claims that this approach backfired when Abdullah Öcalan, the leader of the PKK, was captured after which the PKK froze their armed struggle and terror activities. However, he says, the government did not make progress for a political solution. Both authors suggest that the problem can only be solved in a liberal political environment in which the problem can be discussed freely. Therefore, the democratization of the political sphere is the first step for the solution of the Kurdish problem for the authors.

IV.III.I. Unitary State and Local Governments

A critical point in debates on the Kurdish question was the problematization of the socio-political structure postulated by modern nation-states and the notion of overly bureaucratic and centrist unitary state in present-day Turkey. Abdurrahman Dilipak, who is still critical of the nation-state

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[193] Altan Tan, *2000'de Yeni Gündem*, "Kürt sorunu nereye?", 03.06.2000.
[194] Metiner, *Cennet Düşü*, 116-17.

formation, challenges not the notion of unitary state itself but its implementation. For Dilipak, "the unitary state must not deny ethnic pluralism; national identity must not be interpreted so as to destroy diversity".[195] Altan Tan, on the other hand is more relentless in his critique of the nation-state: "the Kurdish question is unique to Turkey and the Middle East whereas ethnic conflicts are problems of the whole world. Nation-states are not able to resolve the coexistence problem of people of different languages and races in the same geography. Our era, is definitely when the nation-state model fails".[196] Although Tan perseveres in the criticism of the nation-state which he articulated during his Yeni Zemin years, his emphasis on living together in the same country is novel. According to him, "the solution lies in establishing a democratic republic where any language is freely spoken, any language can be freely used as a medium radio and television broadcasts as well as education by preserving the existing borders and unity of the Republic of Turkey".[197] Tan maintains that the overwhelming majority of the Kurds in Turkey do not want to have a separate Kurdish state. Instead of a federal state, Tan envisions a unitary state in the form of a "democratic republic".

On the other hand, Mehmet Metiner takes a more positive stance towards the notion of a unitary state in the aftermath of February 28. For Metiner, the protection of the unitary state formation is the only viable solution for the Kurdish problem. He argues that the ethnic and cultural identities of Turks and Kurds have enmeshed thanks to the common denominators, among which the most important one is the Islamic identity. Therefore, a federal system or autonomy based on ethnic division does not comply with the structure of the society in Turkey.[198] Metiner reports that Abdullah Öcalan abandoned the PKK's older project to create an

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[195] Dilipak & Yurdatapan, *Ortak Payda*, 68.
[196] Altan Tan, *2000'de Yeni Gündem*, "Gündemi açıyoruz", 27.05.2000.
[197] Tan, "'Terörün siyasallaşması' ve 'Kürtler ne istiyor?'".
[198] Metiner, *İdeolojik Devletten Demokratik Devlete*, 109.

independent socialist republic for Kurds. Accordingly, Öcalan envisions a democratic republic where Turks and Kurds live under equal terms as fellow citizens. Metiner maintains that this new paradigm of Abdullah Öcalan is also parallel to his own suggestions for a solution the Kurdish problem.[199] Although he did not defend a federal system in Yeni Zemin, Metiner's strong emphasis on the preservation of the unitary state is also novel.

Thus, while the critique of the notion of the unitary state was an important stance in Yeni Zemin, this critique becomes more moderate in the aftermath of February 28. Rather than the critique of the unitary state formation in Turkey, Yeni Zemin authors stress the necessity of a more autonomous administration at the municipal level. They formulate demands for administrative changes to remedy problems of different ethnic and cultural groups. Yalçın Akdoğan states that the empowerment of local governments is a crucial step towards democratization in Turkey:

> Instead of expecting everything from the authoritarian, oppressive and mandatory center [*otoriter, baskıcı ve emredici merkez*], the empowerment of local governments against the center through dissemination and partition of power is needed. The central government is replaced by participatory, pluralist and power-sharing understanding of administration in the contemporary democracies. Now the notion of adjudicator and servant state [*hakem ve hadim devlet*] is prominent, rather than a repulsive state which is disconnected from its people [*asık suratlı, halkından kopuk devlet*].[200]

For Akdoğan, autonomy for local governments limits the power of the central government through a more balanced reallocation of power between the center and the localities. Moreover, it enables a greater level of pluralism and a greater level of popular participation in political decision making processes by making the will of people in a certain locality more effective. Thus, politically and economically autonomous of local governments with more effective

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[199] Metiner, *Cennet Düşü*, 117.
[200] Akdoğan, *Hayatı ve Siyaseti Düşünmek*, 144.

municipal councils endowed with legislative authority in the local decision-making processes has a key role to change the conception of the state in Turkey.

Autonomous local governments, as a weapon of civil society against the central power have been an important topic in Islamic political thought since the 1990s. The persistence of this idea can also be clearly observed in the writings of both Tan and Metiner. In 2000, Tan repeats the necessity of regulations at the municipal level such as the transfer of authority in especially the management of health, education and sport institutions. He adds that the local governments should be strengthened in terms of their financial and administrative authorities.[201] Mehmet Metiner remarks that Turkey is nowhere near the EU standards in terms of the power of local governments despite the administrative reforms carried out by the AKP in the EU harmonization process.[202] Thus, in addition to democracy and human rights, the EU standards are suggested as the norms Turkey must follow in reforming its administrative structure.

IV.IV.   Concluding Remarks

The reformulation of Islamic political thought in Turkey after the February 28 military intervention is directly related to the oppression the Islamic segments of the society experienced in the aftermath of the intervention. The February 28 shock does not lead Muslim intellectuals to drop their critique of the existing political system in Turkey altogether. Rather, they incorporate novel concepts and discourses into their critique. However, the milder tone of their critique as well as the absence of ambitious alternative projects to the existing system suggest a more moderate position by Muslim intellectuals vis-à-vis the state establishment.

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[201] Tan, ibid.

[202] Metiner, *Cennet Düşü*, 99.

More importantly, although their idealized polity -comprises mainly of a minimal state and a larger autonomous civil society, do not change, there are a number of factors that indicates an ambivalent moderation in Muslim intellectuals' discourses. First, their overall positive attitude towards the accommodationist political stance of the AKP undermines the radical critique of the system observed clearly in Yeni Zemin. Second, Muslim intellectuals take a positive stance vis-à-vis the EU in particular and the West in general. This stance implies the commitment to the notion of liberal democracy in the Western sense without questioning it from an Islamic point of view, as they did in Yeni Zemin. The EU process also appears as an agent of democratization and a shield against the oppressive measures of the state against the Islamic segments of the society. After February 28, the intellectuals highlight the centrality of human rights, transparency and the rule of law in the notion of democracy, related to their experience of February 28. Although this indicates the continuity of intellectuals' pragmatic approach to democracy, it also means that their conceptual portfolio enriches. The impact of February 28 on Muslim intellectuals manifests itself more concretely in the debates on the Kurdish question. The intellectuals' critique of the notion of modern nation-state as well as their proposals for a solution becomes more moderate compared to those in Yeni Zemin years.

Consequently, the Islamist critique of the state appears less enthusiastic, less contentious and considerably moderate in the aftermath of February 28. Yet, it is by no means to suggest that February 28 resulted in Muslim intellectuals' compliance with the existing political system in Turkey. The historical marker of this period in terms of the subject of this thesis is the *tension* between intellectuals' (moderately) persisting critique of the political system and their attitude towards the AKP which declared its submission to the principles of the system. The next chapter will discuss how and to what extent this tension resolved after 2008, a period in which the

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February 28 conditions disappeared as mentioned in the introduction of this chapter, the AKP consolidated its power and the Islamic segments of the society settled into the center of the socio-political system.

CHAPTER V

The Rise of the AKP

During its first term in the office (2002-2007) the AKP exerted an immense effort to convince the public of its own adherence to the founding principles of the republic, most notably secularism. So much so that the AKP government did not even mention the reforms that the Islamic segments of the society would otherwise demand such as the freedom to wear headscarf in public spaces; instead, the party put the accession to the EU at the top of its agenda. The AKP carried out political reforms in conformity with the EU harmonization process "concerning democracy, human rights, the rule of law, and respect for minorities".[203] However, the party's endeavour did not prevent the public outburst of secular segments of the society when an AKP politician's presidency came to the fore after the President Ahmet Necdet Sezer's term of office came to an end in 2007. Started as a preemptive reaction to the candidacy of an AKP member, mass rallies were organized against the AKP government during the spring of 2007, known as "Republic Protests" (*Cumhuriyet Mitingleri*).

The rallies were followed by a political crisis during the presidential elections.[204] The process culminated with the memorandum published by the General Staff on April 27, 2007

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[203] İhsan Dağı, "Post-Islamism *a la Turca*", 95.

[204] The AKP announced that the party's candidate for presidential office is Abdullah Gül. Gül' candidacy drew negative reactions from the secular segments of the society for his political past in Milli Görüş. His wife's headscarf inter alia was interpreted as inconvenient for the secular character of the republic. Gül was elected president in the first round, with the members of Republican's People Party refused to attend parliament meetings for presidential

concerning the presidential elections.[205] Nevertheless, it appears that the political crisis over the presidential elections consolidated the popularity of the AKP, as the party gained 47 percent of the votes (13 point higher than its share in the 2002 Elections) and came to office once again singlehandedly. A year later, the AKP overcame another challenge – as the Chief Public Prosecutor of the Supreme Court of Appeals (*Yargıtay Cumhuriyet Başsavcısı*)' order to shut down the party was rejected by the Constitutional Court with just one vote of difference.

The major outcome of these challenges, related to my points in this thesis, is the new dynamics of the relationship between Muslim intellectuals and the AKP. Muslim intellectuals began designating the party as the most progressive and innovative actor in the political landscape of Turkey. While the AKP is assumed to have a revolutionary position, most Muslim intellectuals consider its political rivals as the remains of the "old Turkey" that thrive for protecting the *status quo*. The AKP's legitimacy for Muslim intellectuals is further consolidated as the governments' relations with Israel and then with the Western powers become tense. Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's role in re-shaping the Middle Eastern politics directly influenced Muslim intellectuals' perception of the AKP. Within this context, the expectations Yeni Zemin's erstwhile authors had from the government were, in a nutshell, to fulfill the "requirements [in turning Turkey into] a powerful country" and the country's "historical mission" by having an independent will vis-à-vis the world-hegemonic powers. As the agency of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and the AKP are assumed to be determining, these processes have deeply affected the nature of intellectuals' relations with the party.

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election. However, the Constitutional Court annulled the first round meetings due to the fact that the quorum was not met. The decision of the CC created a political chaos and the government decided to go for an early election.
[205] The memorandum was named "e-memorandum" (*e-muhtıra*), as it was released online. It asserted that the presidential election process raised the concerns about Turkey's secularist character and that the military is always the guardian of secularism as well as other Atatürk's principles.

Thus, active party politics determine, to a great extent, the course of political discussions of Muslim intellectuals after 2008. In making this observation, allowances must be made to the fact that it mostly bases itself on newspaper articles. Yet, this observation seems to be confirmed by the involvement of some of the authors into active party politics. The relationships, official or unofficial, they built with the AKP most certainly influence their intellectual standing as this chapter aims to underscore. Hence, the observation that the political thought of Yeni Zemin authors revolves around active party politics has also theoretical implications. The tension between the authors' critique of the state and their sympathy with the AKP, given that the latter developed an accommodationist discourse which did not challenge the state establishment, is substantially resolved. On the one hand, the intellectuals sympathizing with the AKP attribute the party a "historical mission" which supposedly embodies the ideal of the Islamic segments of the society. As such, the party's central place in the political system in Turkey brings once dissident Muslim intellectuals right to the center of the political landscape. On the other hand, the exercise of power reveals its divisive nature as the unity once realized around Yeni Zemin disappears with some of the magazine's co-authors extended their critical stance against the political system to the AKP.

This chapter intends to explicate Muslim intellectuals' ideas on the state, democracy and civil society between 2008 and 2014, a period in which the AKP consolidated its power in the state machinery and emerged as the most influential actor in the political system in Turkey. It will demonstrate that there are radical shifts in the authors' critical stance vis-à-vis the state establishment as well as in their articulations of democracy and approaches to the Kurdish question. I will argue that the Islamist critique of the political system in Turkey has considerably *moderated* in the period between 2008 and 2014, although a limited number of authors continue

their radical opposition to the system. The moderation as well as persistence in the intellectuals'
attitude towards the system depends mostly on their relationship with the AKP.

V.I.   The Political System and the State

Considering that Muslim intellectuals derive their legitimacy from their contribution to the
hegemonic discourse of liberal democracy and human rights, one should not expect Muslim
intellectuals to drop their demands to have a minimal state, to democratize the country and to
prioritize individual/society ahead of the state. Thus, the overarching ideals of Muslim
intellectuals to shrink the state to its "natural boundaries" and to prevent its domination over the
civil society and individuals are still intact ostensibly. The Ergenekon, Balyoz and 28 Şubat
cases[206], for example, are interpreted from this point of view by a group of ex-Yeni Zemin
authors. These trials which reshape the nature of politics in their aftermath are considered to be
the steps to realize the ideals of these intellectuals in terms of re-designing the political system in
Turkey. According to Mehmet Metiner[207],

> Settling the score with the Ergenekoncu mentality is as necessary as
> settling the score with the allegedly existing Ergenekon organization. …
> The Ergenekoncu mentality is a hybrid mentality of nationalism
> [*ulusalcılık*] and fascism, just like the Baath ideology. Crudely, it is an
> authoritarian and ideological mindset that consecrates the state, melts all
> its citizens in the same ethnic pot [*bütün vatandaşları tek bir etnik potada
> eriten*], considers differences as threats, and assumes democracy as an
> enemy to the Republic. Those who have the Ergenekoncu-nationalist

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[206] *Ergenekon* is an assumed clandestine organization which established its network in the military, judiciary,
bureaucracy, academia, media and civil society. The secularist organization allegedly plotted against the
government. In 2008, a series of indictments had begun and later on trials known as "Ergenekon trials" had started
against a number of high profile military officers, bureaucrats, journalists and NGO leaders. See Serdar Kaya, "The
Rise and Decline of the Turkish "Deep State": The Ergenekon Case", *Insight Turkey*, 11:4, (2009), 99-113. The
process was followed by trials against an alleged coup attempt known as *Balyoz* (sledgehammer) operation and
then by an investigation of the February 28 military intervention.
[207] Mehmet Metiner's relationship with the AKP became an organic bond and he was elected as an AKP MP in 2011.

[*ulusalcı*] mentality in Turkey see themselves not only as the owners of the Republic but also the owners of the country and the nation.[208]

Metiner and like-minded intellectuals appear stimulated by the political implications of the Ergenekon revelations and subsequent investigations and trials as they conceive of them as the milestones towards the greater transformation in Turkish politics for which they have been calling since the Yeni Zemin years. Metiner's approach to these trials demonstrates the resemblances with his critique of the Kemalist establishment in the state machinery back in the 1990s. Abdurrahman Dilipak, Rasim Özdenören and Ali Bulaç, too, celebrate the trials as they open the way towards liquidation of Kemalist cadres especially among the military elite.

The changing nature of the relationship between the intellectuals and the AKP is among the most remarkable outcomes of this trial process. As the AKP is considered to be the only force that rendered the trials possible and at the same time the victim of alleged coup attempts, the party has become the catalyst of democratization in the intellectuals' discourses. For most Yeni Zemin authors, the AKP symbolizes a revolutionary or transformative body supported by the society which stood against the old state elite who would like to protect the *status quo*. Thus, the legitimacy of the party in the eyes of Muslim intellectuals was boosted during the Ergenekon and following trials. Consequently, during this period the writings of most Yeni Zemin authors center on the AKP and turn their criticism against opposition parties instead.

Rasim Özdenören, who used to prefer staying out of party politics even in his column in daily the Yeni Şafak, is a case in point. Özdenören, while increasingly praising the position of the AKP within Turkish politics since 2008, criticizes the opposition parties in an unprecedented way. For him, "[t]he main point of conflict between the status quo supporters (conservatives [*tutucular*]) and revolutionists (the AK Party) is the antagonism between those who want to

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[208] Mehmet Metiner, *Bugün*, "Ergenekoncu zihniyetle hesaplaşmak!", 21.07.2008.

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preserve the principles of the established system as in the 1920s and 1930s and those who want to modify it in accordance with the changing conditions"[209]. Özdenören refers to the incompatibility which Yeni Zemin had already claimed existed between, one the one hand, the statist, nationalist and modernist state establishment founded in the early years of the republic, and, on the other, the global political landscape as well as Turkey's shifting social structure since the 1980s. Özdenören, evidently, peruses the dynamics of Turkish politics at the level of political parties. In so doing, contrary to Yeni Zemin's pro-civil society discourse, the author attributes the agency in social transformation to an actor of the political sphere as he ascribes a revolutionary role to the AKP.

In a similar vein, Abdurrahman Dilipak emerges as an intellectual close to the AKP after 2008. Dilipak portrays the party as the only agent in front of the guardians of the *status quo* and the illegal bodies operating in Turkish politics and economy: "Look at them [Republican People's Party, (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi – CHP), Nationalist Movement Party (Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi – MHP) and BDP]; they struggle to support the coup [*darbeyi ve darbecileri*] under the roof of the Parliament. They adopt a negative position against the law, justice and peace. The AK Party nicely accomplished this much, despite all these [*bütün bunlara rağmen yine bu kadar şeyi iyi başarmış*], against terror and mafia both inside and outside [the country]".[210] He singles out the AKP in the political landscape of Turkey and designates other political organizations under the same banner, an "anti-AKP block".

Dilipak further solidifies the role of the AKP with references to the historical context within which the AKP was born as well as the social origins of the AKP cadres. Accordingly,

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[209] Rasim Özdenören, *Yeni Şafak*, "Yenilikçilerle tutucuların savaşımı", 05.01.2014.
[210] Abdurrahman Dilipak, *Yeni Akit*, "Türkiye neden böyle!", 23.04.2010.

"the AK Party is aware of its [historical] role, and of the threats and opportunities. These people [AKP cadres] are not from within the state tradition. It is obviously difficult for them to even have a career in bureaucracy [*Hatta bürokraside bile kariyer yapmalarının ne kadar zor olduğu ortada*]".[211] For Dilipak, the social and political bottleneck Turkey faced in the 1990s due mainly to exclusion of the Islamic segments, Kurds and other social groups ascribe the AKP a historical role and "mission". Moreover, he considers the founders of the AKP as the true representatives of these socially excluded groups. Accordingly, the AKP cadres are the only political actors competent to ensure the supremacy of civil authority, end the dominance of the state on the society and secure the smooth cooperation between the political and civil spheres. Thus, he designates the party as the sole agent of political transformation Turkey needs in the direction that is drawn in Yeni Zemin.

On the other hand, Yalçın Akdoğan, who has been in the AKP since the party's foundation, makes statements contradicting the role the others attribute to the party. Addressing the civil-military relations, Akdoğan, using a different pen name, states that:

> No government, as such, can endure its country's military to be knocked out [*yıpratılmasına göz yumamaz*]. [The government] cannot sit back and watch unfair criticisms or consider the weakening of the military as a requirement for democracy. It is everyone's responsibility to make sure [public] institutions are not weakened. Institutions cannot be held responsible for the mistakes of persons; abusing these mistakes [of individuals to hold institutions responsible] is a greater mistake [*bunu istismar vesilesi yapmak ise daha büyük bir yanlıştır*]. People who are not in a position of responsibility [*sorumluluk mevkiinde olmayan bazı kişiler*] see it as a push to fight with the military. However, building just civil-military relations is not the same thing as making room for civil will [*sivil irade*] by draining the military…[212]

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[211] Abdurrahman Dilipak, *Yeni Akit*, "Aykırı bir analiz: AK Parti'nin gücünün sırrı!", 23.04.2011.
[212] Yasin Doğan, *Yeni Şafak*, "Asker-sivil ilişkisi…", 09.01.2009.

Note that it is very difficult to make sense of this statement within the general approach in Yeni Zemin. Indeed, the magazine considered the military to be the symbol of Kemalist tutelage and, in its current status, the biggest obstacle in front of democratization in Turkey. The authors of the magazine urged for a re-design of civil-military relations in favor of the former once and for all. Akdoğan later maintains that during the Ergenekon and Balyoz cases a group within the judiciary intrigued against the "national military" ("*milli orduya kumpas kurdular*"). Accordingly, in order to weaken the military elite, high-ranking officials were arrested and tried with false evidences which disgraced the army.[213] These statements by Akdoğan clearly reflect support for the state and public institutions which contradict the conceptions of and expectations from the AKP by Yeni Zemin authors who seemingly maintain their Yeni Zemin discourses.

Such ambivalences lead other Yeni Zemin authors to problematize the position of the AKP. Ali Bulaç, whose discontent with the AKP manifested itself right after the eruption of the AKP-Gülen strife in late 2013[214], argues that the party adopted the notion of the modern state without criticizing its inadequacies from an Islamic perspective. For Bulaç, modern government is "intrinsically inegalitarian, unjust and corruptive. It is like a crooked ruler [*eğri cetvel gibidir*]; if you give it to the hands of Omar the Caliph you cannot draw a straight (just) line with it". Accordingly, relying on the notion of the modern state, the AKP operates through the mechanisms of modern government. Nevertheless, Bulaç is concerned that Islam and Islamism

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[213] "Akdoğan: Orduya kumpas kurdular", *NTV.com.tr*, last modified 24.12.2013, http://www.ntv.com.tr/arsiv/id/25487788/

[214] From the beginning of the AKP rule in 2002, Gülen network and the AKP government have had close ties. The NGOs, educational institutions and business associations within Gülen network have enjoyed great opportunities to expand their activity up until the recent strife between the parties. Meanwhile, police officers, military personnel and jurists affiliated to the network were allegedly appointed to higher posts in the security and jurisdiction. The tension between Gülen network and the AKP, which is claimed to be dated back to Turkey's conflict with Israel after Mavi Marmara incident in 2010, revealed after the government corruption scandal in late 2014. The AKP claimed that the investigations in December 17 and 25 were carried out by jurists in Gülen network in order to topple down the AKP government. The conflict is still at its zenith in 2015.

might be held accountable for all the faults of the AKP, although the party gave up the Islamic political identity and posited its orientation as conservative.[215] Seen from this perspective, the AKP contradicts the worldview and expectations of the social segments it claims to be representing due to its uncritical use of the modern state apparatuses. Moreover, Bulaç implies that the predicaments of the AKP's power are harmful to the Islamist ideology.

A similar critique is raised by Ümit Aktaş based on the interaction between the Islamist ideology and conservative politics, or between the Islamic segments and the AKP. According to Aktaş, the dynamism of the Islamic segments of the society brought the AKP to power. This once conservative social base was mobilized around an Islamist ideology best articulated by Milli Görüş. However, the AKP "tries to undo this mobilization in order to solidify its power. It [the AKP] endeavors to render Islamism conservative [*İslamcılığı muhafazakarlaştırmaya*]. It renders a revolutionary, pro-change and libertarian movement conservative [*devrimci, değişimci, özgürlükçü hareketi muhafazakarlaştırmaya*] and integrates it to the status quo in a way to ensure the duration of its own vested power [*iktidar sürecini muhkemleştirecek bir minvalde*]".[216] Thus, Aktaş's remark suggests that the AKP appears as an agent distinct only through its religious rhetoric in an otherwise laicist political system. The AKP is here decidedly not perceived as a revolutionary agent, as other Muslim intellectuals would have. For Aktaş the party operates within the limits of the existing political system of which he remains critical.

The intellectuals' relations with the AKP have a particular impact on the notion of the state in their discussions. Muslim intellectuals rely on a particular discourse based on a severe critique of the very notion of the state. In this discourse the individual is prioritized over the

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[215] Ali Bulaç, *Zaman*, "Özeleştiri", 30.12.2013.
[216] Ümit Aktaş, "'Pasif devrim' mi, statükonun dönüşümü mü?", *Birikim*, Vol. 283 (Nov., 2012), 86.

state; and the civil society should be protected from the interventions of the political sphere. Nonetheless, this discourse clearly contradicts with the mechanisms of the political system in Turkey whose major arbiter is now the AKP, the political organization they fully support. It is possible to observe the implications of these contradictions during the debates over the status of public institutions such as RTÜK, YÖK (Yükseköğretim Kurulu [Higher Education Board]) and DİB. Abdurrahman Dilipak and Mehmet Metiner who used to articulate their discontent with the mere existence or at least the then status of YÖK and DİB on every occasion remain mostly silent concerning these institutions.

The contradiction between Mehmet Metiner's perception of the political orientation of the AKP and the statements of Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan regarding religious education in Turkey is yet another example of Muslim intellectuals' silences. According to Metiner, "the AK Party never identified itself as a "political Islamist" party. It always objected to these identifications, because "political Islamism" is imminently a "project concerning the state" ["*devlet projesi"ni içkindir*]. More clearly, it is grounded on taking hold of the state and then Islamizing [*Müslümanlaştırma*] the society. The AK Party, as a conservative democratic party, never had such an aim".[217] Metiner already expressed his distaste of the political Islamic ideology for it implies a state-centric worldview. In 1999, Metiner stated that political Islam envisions the same social engineering mechanisms as Kemalism and other authoritarian and totalitarian ideologies. Thus, Erdoğan's desire to raise religious generations[218] is difficult to make sense of from Metiner's point of view. However, I failed to find a reaction from Metiner to Erdoğan's statement which would otherwise be construed as an intervention into the civil

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[217] Mehmet Metiner, *Yeni Şafak*, "Vesayetiniz ve kibriniz çuvala sığmıyor", 23.01.2014
[218] Erdoğan states "We will raise religious generations (*dindar nesil yetiştireceğiz*). Do you expect from a party with conservative democratic identity to raise an atheist youth?" in a party congress. See "Dindar gençlik yetiştireceğiz", *Hürriyet.com.tr*, last modified 02.02.2012, http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/19825231.asp

societal domain through the state apparatuses given Yeni Zemin's discontent with the state's role in religious affairs.

In the last analysis, the AKP with its solidified power and all the ambivalences in terms of its stance in the political system has become the main object of dispute among the Muslim intellectuals. The power of the party, on the one hand, turns some intellectuals into its own organic intellectuals by shifting once dissident Muslim intellectuals to the center of the political landscape. On the other hand, the exercise of power carves a new line of division between those who stand close to the party and those who maintain their critical stance towards the political power center.

The Islamist moderation in the critique of the existing political system after 2008 reveals itself most clearly in three aspects. First, Muslim intellectuals increasingly engage with active party politics and their debates revolve not around the political system itself but the actors of operating within the system. Although for most Muslim intellectuals the AKP means more than an ordinary party in the political landscape of Turkey, the party's conflicts and competition with other political parties pulls the intellectuals into a within-system debate, given their close relationships with the AKP. Second, Muslim intellectuals does not address any criticism towards the public institutions that used to be perceived as the apparatuses of state intervention into the civil society, such as DİB, YÖK, and religious education. Thus, the period, 2008-2014, appears as a "period of silences", as opposed to the contentious attitude in Yeni Zemin. Third, Muslim intellectuals do not offer an alternative notion of the state to the modern state establishment they used to criticize fiercely. These "silences" of the post-2008 concerning the structure of the political system in Turkey makes it rather difficult to observe the reflections of the conflict between the exercise of power by the AKP and Yeni Zemin authors' conceptions of the state.

Nevertheless, the debates on democracy reveal the implications of this conflict especially at the conceptual terrain. In the following section, I will discuss the authors' conceptions of democracy after 2008 as well as the concepts and values highlighted in these conceptions.

V.II.   Democracy and Democratic Mechanisms

Yeni Zemin authors' changing relations with the AKP have determined their articulation of the notion of democracy and their emphasis on the values associated with the concept. First, the authors' stance vis-à-vis the AKP and the other parties and their critical/judgmental attitude towards organizations that are at odds with the government undermine the value of political pluralism in their discourses. Hence, pluralism as a key concept in Yeni Zemin and in the aftermath of February 28 has lost its prominence among Muslim intellectuals. Pluralism is both less frequent in Yeni Zemin authors' writings and less central as a *sine qua non* condition for democracy. Similar silences are observed in other values associated with democracy such as human rights and the rule of law. Note that these concepts were central for Muslim intellectuals both in the 1990s and in the early 2000s. Evidently, most Yeni Zemin authors do not lionize these concepts any more.

On the other hand, the antagonism between the "elected" and the "appointed", mentioned in both Yeni Zemin and the writings of the authors under scrutiny after February 28, has become much more prominent. Note that the Ergenekon and Balyoz cases are thought to resolve this antagonism in favor of the elected government; thus, to highlight the superiority of the representatives of the national will within the bureaucracy means to reinforce the legitimacy of the AKP in these trial processes. Mehmet Metiner's reaction to a polemic between the president of the Constitutional Court and the PM Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in April 2014 is a case in point.

Metiner first asks: "[d]o the members of the Constitutional Court want to do politics? Or do they want to create a power domain [*iktidar alanı*] for themselves by taking position in political quarrels? Then, as the PM says, they remove their frocks and appear as they are… You cannot do politics in that frock…".[219] Later he declares that he neither trusts the Constitutional Court nor respects its decisions. He ends the article with a more profound critique of the Constitutional Court:

> It should be known that our holy nation [*aziz milletimiz*] would never allow for the tutelage of the Constitutional Court… Neither can we, politicians of the AK Party, overlook this tutelary body… We never will… The Constitutional Court must understand that it is not the almighty… The power belongs to the people in democracies. And the real determining power [*asıl belirleyici güç*] is the civil authority in democracies. There cannot be any tutelary body above the civil authority…[220]

Seeing the AKP as the civil authority, Metiner points out to the fact that the party is the true representative of the popular will. His attitude towards the political nature of the Constitutional Court yet again indicates a tendency to overemphasize the legitimacy of party politics. Moreover, Metiner remains silent for the limits of representation and political participation posed by the Constitution and the Political Parties Law he severely criticized both in Yeni Zemin and in the aftermath of February 28.

The reactions to the Gezi Park protests in the summer of 2013[221] demonstrate very well how the authors articulate the notion of democracy. We should note, first and foremost, that the

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[219] Mehmet Metiner, *Aktüel*, "Vesayet vesayettir işte!", 14.04.2014,
http://www.aktuel.com.tr/yazar/mehmetmetiner/2014/04/14/vesayetvesayetti775ri775ste
[220] Ibid.
[221] In accordance with the government's project for renovation of Taksim square, the City Council of Istanbul decided to destroy Gezi Park nearby the square and re-build an Ottoman military barrack. Following the decision a group of environmental activists pitch their tents in the park to resist the destruction. The violent attack of security forces to remove the protesters from the park and ensure continuity of construction process on May 28, 2013 severely backlashed. Thousands of people rushed into the square to repel the security forces and occupy the park.

attitudes towards the protest movements have changed over time. Some authors approached the protests with caution right after they erupted all over the country in the first days of June 2013, differentiating the social reflexes of the youth that are to be understood and taken seriously from the groups which to their eyes radicalized the protests and began targeting directly the government. Over the weeks, the same authors shifted their discourse on the protest movements and accused them of being coup attempts against the AKP government. Rasim Özdenören first describes the young people on the streets as the representatives of the indigo generation whose voice should be listened to. He maintains that the youth shout slogans for "more freedom" and "more democracy". Özdenören asks "[d]oes the very change in these slogans not suggest anything? Do you say the prominence of people's environmental sensibilities do not mean anything"?[222] Later in 2014, Özdenören associates the Gezi protests with the corruption investigations in 17 and 25 December 2013 for both incidents are allegedly attempts to topple the AKP government and/or Tayyip Erdoğan himself. In this analysis he rallies theories which attributed foreign interventions and particularly interferences by lobbies in the US and the EU and their domestic underlings who oppose the government's foreign policy.[223]

From the early days on, Abdurrahman Dilipak's views on the Gezi Park protests dovetail with Özdenören's later comments. Accordingly, "[t]he game was very clear. This was a revolt and an Ergenekon uprising. And the scriptwriters were the same with those of Reyhanlı. A cadre that gave up hope from the ballot box and is stalemated with the 28 Şubat case. They passed from being the advocate of Ergenekon to being the gladiator of Ergenekon. The American ambassador was involved in it too. So did the daily Le Monde and Germany. And so did their

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The process escalated in public protests all around the country. Targeting mainly the government and its alleged authoritarian tendencies, the protests lasted until the mid-June in Istanbul as well as in other major cities.

[222] Rasim Özdenören, *Yeni Şafak*, "Kuklacı kim? Ya da İndigo kuşağı sahnede", 13.06.2013.

[223] Rasim Özdenören, *Yeni Şafak*, "Türkiye"nin bakışı yeniden dışarıya yöneliyor", 24.04.2014.

inner extensions of course".[224] Dilipak enjoins the "Community of Gezi Park [to found] a party since all of Turkey allegedly supports them. There are rightists, leftists, religionists, all of them. Let's see how much vote they will get. Let them write down their demands from the government to their party manifesto. Undoubtedly, everything is not about the ballot box; but what a democracy without ballot box means should be taken into account too".[225] Hence, we see that the "ballot box" and "national will" are prioritized over other values that the authors used to associate with democracy such as participation, civil society and pluralism. They are more silent in terms of reinforcing democracy with these concepts.

The authors who do not have close links, officially or unofficially, with the AKP respond in different ways to this conception of democracy based on civil authority, national will and ballot-box. Ali Bulaç, for example, problematizes the majoritarian characteristics of these concepts and the feasibility of representation of the will. Bulaç says

> The PM thinks he represents the national will thanks to the 50 % support he obtained; therefore he, by using the authority that the electorate gave him, says 'we have decided, we will certainly implement the project [of re-building an Ottoman military barrack over the Gezi Park]'. The PM considers "appropriating" [*temellük ettiğini düşünüyor*] [this right] as he represents the will of the electorate based on a Rousseauian and Hobbesian national will and absolute power concepts.[226]

Bulaç points out to the crisis of liberal democracy for abandoning the hegemonic concepts of the post-Cold War context such as civil society and pluralistic democracy. His remark implies that the AKP abuses democracy as the party leaders assign themselves the role of representatives of individuals' will. In a similar vein Altan Tan reasserts the need to reform the Political Parties

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[224] Abdurrahman Dilipak, *Yeni Akit*, "'Mesele park meselesi değil, hâlâ anlamadınız mı?'", 07.06.2013
[225] Abdurrahman Dilipak, *Yeni Akit*, "Şahin Alpay'dan evirip çevirmeden", 09.06.2013
[226] Ali Bulaç, *Zaman*, "Tahrir-Taksim", 08.06.2013.

Law to consolidate democracy, as the current law allows the party leaders to abuse their power and undermine democratic principles.[227]

Hence, most Yeni Zemin authors diverge from the discourse of liberal democracy that they had espoused in the early 1990s. Replacing the conceptual framework of liberal and/or radical democracy with an alternate notion of national will adequately illustrates this divergence. It is no coincidence that this happens in a period of economic crisis at the global scale. The crisis has shaken the hegemony of (neo) liberalism having predominated since the end of the Cold War. The connection that Yeni Zemin authors establish between the end of the Cold War and their demands of democratization is an important signal to predict the repercussions of the economic crisis among Muslim intellectuals. Abdurrahman Dilipak and Ali Bulaç notably apprehend the 2008 economic crisis as a factor that harbingers the collapse of global capitalism and liberal democracy as a system that global capitalism imposed upon peoples.

In this sense, the changing direction of Turkey's foreign policy priorities, labeled in public as an "axis shift" (*eksen kayması*) and comprised mainly slackening of the reforms towards EU harmonization evidently did not create a discontent among Yeni Zemin authors. In the aftermath of February 28 the EU was considered to be the agent of democratization and the shield for the Islamic segments' quest for recognition by the state through an artful usage of concepts such as human rights and basic rights and liberties. However, after 2008, the ideal of EU membership retreated among Muslim intellectuals who do not even react to the AKP relegating EU accession to the bottom of its political agenda. On the contrary, Abdurrahman Dilipak celebrates the government's shift from Europe to the Middle East as it signifies the

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[227] Altan Tan, *Değişen Ortadoğu'da Kürtler*, (Çıra Yayınları: İstanbul, 2011), 28-29.

AKP's ability at capturing the "*zeitgeist*".[228] The attitude of Dilipak reminds the close link between the success of the economic program that the Western powers promote throughout the globe and their political hegemony in non-Western contexts. In this regard, the crisis is a milestone in the reconstruction of the Islamic political identity and Islamic thought both in Turkey and in other parts of the Islamic World.

Thus, while democracy was an instrument of Muslim opposition to the system in Yeni Zemin, it became an instrument of integration to the system in the aftermath of February 28. In Yeni Zemin, authors have different attitudes towards the notion of democracy. It was often obscure whether they embraced democratic concepts and values or strategically adopted them in their discourse. Nevertheless, the dissenting position of the authors as well as of the Islamic segments vis-à-vis the socio-political system enabled Muslim intellectuals to unite under a particular discourse of democratization. February 28 brought along the dominance of pragmatic embracement of democracy as democratization gave the Islamic movement an opportunity to integrate into the system given which the Islamic segments welcomed under the unfavorable conditions created by the February 28 process. Finally, after 2008, democracy in the Western sense has become the main object of Muslim intellectuals' critique. In other words, while Yeni Zemin authors criticize the political system in Turkey through the concepts of liberal democracy during the 1990s, they turn their critique directly towards liberal democracy after 2008 economic crisis.

The trajectory of Ali Bulaç's attitude towards democracy illuminates this process clearly. Bulaç sought alternatives for the liberal democratic system in the 1990s. He started a debate over the Medina Charter as an Islamic model for a pluralistic society. Bulaç's main aspiration was to

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[228] Abdurrahman Dilipak, *Yeni Akit,* "Evet eksen kayması..", 24.10.2010.

find a way to transcend liberal democracy by appealing to Islamic sources. In the aftermath of February 28, Bulaç's endeavor seems to be disrupted and he himself climbed on the bandwagon of pro-democratic Muslim intellectuals. Nevertheless, Bulaç raises his critique to liberal democracy once again after 2008. According to him, "Western democracies established political pluralism, but they could not establish socio-cultural pluralism; therefore they can easily give up multiculturalism. You may exalt Western democracies if you please. The crisis we entered into becomes concrete exactly at this point; the crisis stimulates ethnic conflicts, religious and ethnic cleansings, even gradual genocides".[229] Thus, Bulaç maintains that the liberal democracy model of the West fails to cure the ills of both Western and non-Western societies. The trajectory of his attitude towards the liberal democracy since the 1990s illustrates clearly the link between the economic potency of the West and its intellectual and political dominance in non-Western contexts.

Abdurrahman Dilipak targets capitalism rather than liberal democracy directly. For him the "end of history" thesis of Francis Fukuyama has come to nothing: "Fukuyama and his old prophecy were wrong. What is going to hit us is the adventure of Western-type modernization as well as the curse of secularization. I mean Westernization. Western-type family and lifestyle is and will be hitting us. This is the real catastrophe".[230] Dilipak's outright criticism of Western values offers yet another example of the link between the 2008 economic crisis and the dissolution of Western hegemony in the political thought of Muslim intellectuals. Thus, the impact of the political and ideological context of the post-Cold War period on Muslim intellectuals' reliance on the discourse of democracy and human rights declined after 2008. That the AKP government as well as Muslim intellectuals orient themselves towards alternatives for

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[229] Ali Bulaç, *Zaman*, "'Çok hukuklu' olmak", 13.07.2009.
[230] Abdurrahman Dilipak, *Yeni Akit*, "Ah Fukuyama ah!", 21.10.2008.

the Western political ideologies is one sign in the decline of their commitment to the discourse of liberal democracy.

The undermining of the notion of liberal democracy may also be attributed to Muslim intellectuals' misplaced expectations from a democratic system. Note that these authors consider democracy, ever since the Yeni Zemin years, as a regime which would enable society to enunciate its true identity; and this authentic identity is assumed to be an Islamic one. Therefore, democracy is often embraced instrumentally to gain recognition for the Islamic identity and consolidate the political rights of the Islamic segments of the society. The latter were integrated into the socio-political system during the AKP period. An important indicator of this integration is the rise of Islamic-oriented business associations and their influence in the political decision making process, especially when compared to the business associations which would not typically identify themselves as Islamic.[231] Similar tendencies can be observed with Muslim intellectuals and business associations such as MÜSİAD with regard to their understanding of the state's role in civil society and of liberal democratic concepts and values. Thus, after 2008, most Muslim intellectuals stop utilizing democratic concepts to formulate their critique of the existing political system in Turkey. The articulation of democracy and democratic values such as pluralism, the rule of law, and basic rights and liberties are not invoked as much during this period since Muslim intellectuals do not feel the necessity to reassert their pragmatic interpretation of these concepts and values.

Nevertheless, this surreptitious undermining of democracy does not lead to a well-articulated alternative political project neither as a counter-project to the existing system nor as

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[231] Ayşe Buğra & Osman Savaşkan, "Politics and class: The Turkish Business Environment in the Neoliberal Age", *New Perspectives on Turkey*, 46, (2012), 27-63. For a more detailed analysis of the relationship between the state and business associations see Buğra & Savaşkan, *New Capitalism in Turkey: The Relationship between Politics, Religion and Business*, (Edward Elgar: Cheltenham, 2014).

an autonomously defined ideal-typical liberal democracy. Instead, Muslim intellectuals display a more *conformist* attitude which contrasts with their revolutionary dynamism of their Yeni Zemin years. Ali Bulaç put deliberative democracy (*müzakereci demokrasi*) forward as a humble proposal; yet after 2008 he seems no longer eager to re-claim a thoroughly alternative system like the Medina Model. Dilipak was among the enthusiastic proponents of the alternative model suggested by Bulaç. In the 1990s, he maintained the only viable solution to the problems of Turkey is to read carefully the Medina Charter and derive from the document an alternative political model. Mehmet Metiner, too, was interested in Bulaç's Medina Model in Yeni Zemin. It is important to note that none of these intellectuals bring up the debates over the Medina Model after the 2008 economic crisis as they consider it to be a simple milestone to the end of Western economic and political hegemony.

That Muslim intellectuals are rather reluctant to offer radical political alternatives to the current system is related to the changing nature of the relationship between them and political power. Recall that most Muslim intellectuals radically criticized the political system in Turkey in Yeni Zemin back in the 1990s. So much so that when any action of the RP was perceived as a centrist and/or accommodationist strategy, the intellectuals severely criticized the party. Following the behavioral moderation of ex-Milli Görüş cadres in the AKP, Muslim intellectuals denigrating the political system in Turkey interestingly did not react negatively to this moderation in the aftermath of February 28. Eventually, the inability to offer well-articulated alternatives to the liberal democracy suggests that the Islamic critique of the state, public institutions and the political system in Turkey is on the wane after 2008. Thus, the democracy debates indicate that the ideological moderation has followed, in one way or the other, the behavioral moderation within the Islamic movement in Turkey. The AKP moderation refers to

the abandonment of the confrontational position and adoption of a new discourse and strategies aiming to be integrated into the existing system. The accommodationist position of the party neither originated from a moderation of Islamist critique of the system nor did it lead Muslim intellectuals to immediately drop their critique of the system. However, as the present democracy discussions suggest, Muslim intellectuals mostly abandon their critical stance towards the system along with the integration of the Islamic political movement into the existing political system. In this sense, Muslim intellectuals do not employ democratic concepts and values to criticize the state establishment as well as the Islamic political movement.

Along with democracy, the Kurdish question has been an important theme that Muslim intellectuals raised their criticism towards the political system. Moreover, Muslim intellectuals had the opportunity to articulate their political demands and practical solutions more clearly in their discussions of the Kurdish question. The next section will discuss the intellectuals' ideas about the Kurdish question after 2008 in order to explore whether ideological moderation is at play in their approach to this problem as well.

V.III.   The Kurdish Question and the Administrative Structure

Unlike the aftermath of February 28, the Kurdish question draws the attention of Muslim intellectuals once again after 2008. There are different reasons for this growing interest on the part of different authors. Mehmet Metiner and Altan Tan are already important figures in public discussions of the Kurdish question in Turkey. Nevertheless, since Metiner directly embarked upon party politics as an AKP member, he has been specifically involved in the Kurdish question. Especially after 2008, Metiner appears as one of the authorities on the issue among the AKP members in the party's political campaigns towards a solution to the problem. Altan Tan, on the

other hand, has devoted his intellectual capacity for the Kurdish question as he has become more involved in the Kurdish political movement. Eventually, Tan was elected as an MP from the Peace and Democracy Party in 2011 and assumed the role of an Islamist Kurdish politician within the Kurdish political movement. Furthermore, the "Kurdish initiative"[232] (*Kürt açılımı*) announced in 2009 and the "solution process"[233] (*çözüm süreci*) in 2012 started the ongoing public debate on the Kurdish question in Turkey. This process inevitably stimulates the attention of other Muslim intellectuals. Therefore, the period between 2008 and 2014 sees the development of a vibrant and multidimensional discussion of the Kurdish question based on ex-Yeni Zemin authors' writings. As the discussion will illustrate, the main lines of division among the authors again originate from their relations with and attitudes towards the AKP.

For Muslim intellectuals, a vibrant public debate that contributes to the solution of the Kurdish question by creating an awareness of the problem is the most auspicious outcome of the governments' initiatives. Thus, to varying degrees, the intellectuals sympathize with the reforms and projects of the AKP government for a solution to what is arguably one of the most serious domestic problems of Turkey before and after 2008. That the Kurdish ethnic identity and cultural rights of Kurds are spoken out by politicians and by the general public implies a tacit recognition of the Kurdish identity, which is considered to be the very first necessary step towards a solution. Among ex-Yeni Zemin authors, Mehmet Metiner is perhaps the most optimistic follower of this

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[232] Kurdish initiative is part of a more encompassing government project, known as "Democratic initiative", targeting ethnic and religious minorities in Turkey to improve democracy and human rights. Within this direction, the government announced a roadmap to solve the Kurdish question including constitution amendments, regulations for 24-hour private TV channels in Kurdish, foundation of university departments for Kurdish language and literature and renaming residential areas with Kurdish population.

[233] Solution process, as a follow-up of Kurdish initiative, aims at resolving the armed conflict between the Republic of Turkey and Kurdish militia. The government started negotiations with the imprisoned leader of the Kurdish insurgency Abdullah Öcalan to ensure disarmament of the PKK. Meanwhile the PKK declared ceasefire and retreat of its armed forces out of Turkey. However, the process almost ceased after the governments alleged indifference to ISIL attacks on Kobane, a Kurdish town in Northern Syria in the late 2014.

process. According to Metiner, Turkey is no more the "old Turkey" that denies the existence of a distinct Kurdish identity. Metiner maintains that the problems originated from the denial of the Kurdish identity at the level of the government (*devlet katında*). "Thankfully", says Metiner, "this mentality has become a thing of the past. The ethnic identity of the Kurds and their mother tongue are no longer denied. Quite the contrary, they are recognized with democratic sensibilities at the level of the government. What I mean is that the 'Kurdish question' is over. The 'new Turkey' does not have a 'Kurdish question'".[234] Metiner suggests that a process towards the solution has begun with the will of the AKP government. Thus, the government overcame the problem at the discursive level and supported this discourse with projects like TRT Şeş, the official TV channel broadcasting in Kurdish.

Although Altan Tan shares the same sympathy with the government's initiatives and projects like TRT Şeş, he maintains a rather pessimistic opinion for AKP's competency in solving the Kurdish question. According to him "the problem is not related to governments or political parties which are only different versions of one same regime. The present government is the 60th government. Nothing would change even if another 60 governments come to pass. There is an urgent need for a new social contract."[235] Unlike the enthusiasm of Metiner, Tan cautions that there is a long and complicated way to a permanent solution. He identifies the Kurdish question as a problem of the political system which, parallel to the arguments in Yeni Zemin, should be completely changed. Thus, while Metiner does not question the political system and discusses the Kurdish question on the basis of political actors and governments instead of the structure of the state, Tan reproduces the discourse of change and renewal and maintains the critique of the state.

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[234] Mehmet Metiner, *Devletin Beka Sorunu: Hedef İç Savaş Mı?*, (Yakın Plan Yayınları: İstanbul, 2011), 69.
[235] Altan Tan, *Değişen Ortadoğu'da Kürtler*, 19.

Another disagreement among the intellectuals is about their attitudes towards the AKP's concrete projects concerning the cultural rights of Kurds. Note that in 2004, these projects of the government, most notably TRT Şeş, were considered to be positive, to the extent that they are able to create a broader awareness of Kurdish identity, but were not viewed to be sufficient steps towards a solution in Metiner's 2004 book, *Cennet Düşü* [A Dream of Heaven]. Whereas, he refers to TRT Şeş in 2011 as a "paradigmatic revolution". After these cultural reforms and discursive shift at the governmental level, according to Metiner, "there comes the turn to realize a greater democratic integration policy based on the principles of free and equal citizenship".[236] For him, the solution is only one step ahead: the acquisitions of the Kurds should be guaranteed by legal reforms and constitutional amendments.

On the other hand, Ali Bulaç approves projects such as TRT Şeş and Kurdish mawlid and maintains that Kurdish people appreciate these projects. However, for him "the government made two mistakes [following these steps] : a) these are not sufficient. [The government] could not promise more extensive and permanent solutions; b) it gives the impression that only the AKP can represent the Kurdish electorate. It intends to sideline the DTP [Demokratik Toplum Partisi (Democratic Society Party)][237] completely from politics".[238] Following this dual criticism of the AKP government, it is important to remember that Mehmet Metiner, an AKP MP, does not offer concrete reform policies besides legal arrangements. The only direct proposal of Metiner is the necessity to re-define the concept of citizenship in the constitution by removing references to the Turkish ethnic identity, which is agreed by different intellectuals as well. By contrast, Altan Tan makes a series of suggestions including the promotion of education in the mother tongue,

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[236] Metiner, *Devletin Beka Sorunu*, 29.
[237] DTP was the main Kurdish political party, active between 2005 and 2009.
[238] Ali Bulaç, *Zaman*, "AKP ve Kürt seçmen", 04.04.2009.

unlimited broadcasting in Kurdish in private TV channels and a general amnesty for Kurdish militia.

Furthermore, Metiner's overemphasis on the approach of political actors of the AKP government for a solution indicates that Metiner sees the AKP as the most potent, if not the sole, agent of change with regard to the Kurdish Question. Metiner's opinion which transpires more clearly in his attitude towards the actors of the Kurdish political movement is shared by other Muslim intellectuals close to the AKP. Reminding that democratic reforms and the struggle against terror are the two pillars of the AKP's democratic initiative, Yalçın Akdoğan argues that

> [i]t is impossible to make progress in issues like the Kurdish question by taking democratic actions one-sidedly. [The government] has to struggle with the factors that sabotage the [solution] process and strive at hegemonizing a certain group of people (*belli bir halk kesimini tasallutu altına almaya çalışan*). Fighting against the terrorist organization PKK and undermining its hegemony is essential and unavoidable for many purposes, notably for democratization.[239]

In this approach, the actors of Kurdish political movement, the PKK and BDP, are not considered as agents of the solution in the Kurdish question. Metiner, Abdurrahman Dilipak and Rasim Özdenören embrace the distinction between the Kurdish question and the terror (security) question that determines the AKP's approach to the issue. Moreover, they argue that Kurdish political actors are obstacles for the AKP reforms.

The authors emphasize the illegitimacy of the Kurdish political actors mainly by associating the PKK and DTP/BDP with the Ergenekon organization and certain secret services. More importantly, this association allows some of the authors to designate the Kurdish political actors within a so called anti-AKP block. Abdurrahman Dilipak concisely articulates this opinion as follows:

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[239] Yasin Doğan, *Yeni Şafak*, "Açılımın önemli ayağı olarak 'Güvenlik'", 19.08.2011.

The BDP is the "Kurdish party of the deep state", as the CHP is the "Turkish party of the deep state" (*Türklerin "Derin Devlet Partisi" ise, BDP de "Kürtlerin Derin Devlet Partisi"*). They share the same values; use the same methods and a shared language. Both are incumbent upon "advocating the deep state". … These [roles of Turkish and Kurdish deep state parties] are the troubles brought by September 12 [1980 Military Coup]. The politics over the Kurds are maintained by the Turks. Everyone in this dirty game is a figurant of imperialism.[240]

Thus, Dilipak reiterates the negative attitude, common to Muslim intellectuals close to the AKP, towards other political organizations to boost the legitimacy of the AKP in politics. The incorporation of the PKK and BDP within this framework underscores the opinion that the AKP is the sole legitimate and sincere political actor advocating a solution for the Kurdish question. Opposed to this argument, Altan Tan states that associating the PKK with Ergenekon works to undermine the legitimate demands of the Kurds or, at best, postponing these demands.[241]

The most striking example of the changing attitudes of Muslim intellectuals after 2008 in the Kurdish question debates is definitely Mehmet Metiner. Both in Yeni Zemin and in the aftermath of February 28, Metiner sees the Kurdish question as a political, social and cultural problem. Terror, i.e. the PKK, is considered only to be an end result of the denial of Kurdish identity, the lack of a legal guarantee for the cultural and political rights and the relative poverty of the Kurdish people. Therefore, the discussion of the PKK and the Kurdish political movement in general were minor themes in his writings about the Kurdish question. However, his 2011 book *Devletin Beka Sorunu* (*The State's Persistence Problem*) offers a very long discussion of the Kurdish political movement where Metiner criticizes the PKK and other actors of this movement on several grounds. While Metiner explicitly stated in 2004 that terror would eventually cease with the necessary political and legal reforms, in 2011 he argues that the first

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[240] Abdurrahman Dilipak, *Yeni Akit*, "'Sivil itaatsizlik' mi dediniz?", 26.03.2011.
[241] Tan, *Değişen Ortadoğu'da Kürtler*, 47.

step should be taken by the PKK. Accordingly, the organization must declare that the militia will retreat outside the border with an unconditional ceasefire. "Only then", Metiner says, "the way towards the 'political solution could be paved".[242]

In the light of these discussions, after 2008, Muslim intellectuals close to the AKP lay the emphasis on the tasks that should be carried out by the forces against the state in the Kurdish question. The state does not have the primary responsibility for a solution to the problem anymore, because, as Metiner and like-minded intellectuals suggest, the AKP government has been doing the part of the state since the early 2000s. However, what is considered to be the task of the state in the Kurdish question after 2008 is evidently different from that in Yeni Zemin and in the aftermath of February 28. Thus, the Kurdish question is another central theme in the Islamic political thought in Turkey through which we observe the moderation in Islamist critique of the state establishment.

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[242] Metiner, *Devletin Beka Sorunu*, 123.

Chapter VI

Conclusion

The main objective of this thesis was to understand the nature of the transformation(s) in contemporary Islamic political thought in Turkey with a specific emphasis on the notion of the state in Islamist ideology. Both the idea to study recent transformations in political Islam and focusing on the notion of the state originate from the review of existing literature on Islamic movement and political thought in Turkey. The literature focusing on the transformation in Islamic movements all around the world after 1980s and 1990s argue for the emergence of populist conservative political movements out of political Islam. These studies, following the framework of "moderation theory" which originally developed to explain the evolution of social and Christian democratic parties in Western European countries, hold that radically oppositional political organizations moderate their political stance once they choose to opt into the political system. Accordingly, the inclusive opportunity structures within the existing system and the vote-maximizing strategies of the opposition party bring along behavioral moderation of the party which is accompanied by a process of ideological moderation. Moderation theory presumes that this process of moderation consolidates the democratic system.[243]

Most of the studies concerning political Islam in Turkey maintain that a similar process of moderation has taken place in the political Islamic movement in Turkey as suggested by the

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[243] Tezcür, "The Moderation Theory Revisited", 69.

division within Milli Görüş among conservatives and reformists. This scholarship considers that the moderation of political Islam in Turkey culminated with the February 28 military intervention and the reformists' foundation of the AKP. Hence, the AKP is thought to be the product of Islamism's pro-system evolution in Turkey as the proponents of Islamist ideology as well as the reformists of the Islamic political movement embrace democracy, political pluralism and gave up their challenge to secularism.

Although the existing literature does not say much about the trajectory of political Islamic thought, it was not difficult to envisage the implications of the above-mentioned arguments. Accordingly, the partial and often pragmatic adoption of the discourse of democracy and human rights paved the way for a moderate political movement founded by the reformist politicians of Milli Görüş. The studies in the literature review of this thesis point out that Islamic political thought has already abandoned the classical Islamist ideal of capturing the state and applying the Sharia. Thus, accompanied by the behavioral moderation of the political movement, Islamic political thought has ceased to be a revolutionary ideology with totalitarian tendencies and become compatible with the existing socio-political system. Yet this linear notion of transformation does not help us understand the AKP's more recent authoritarian turn. Broadly speaking it is inadequate from a heuristic point of view if we are to explain the transformation of the Islamic movement and political thought during the AKP period. Therefore, following the arguments in the literature, the reasons why the AKP has diverged from its erstwhile discourse emphasizing democracy and human rights and further the reasons why this transformation seems not to have undermined the party's legitimacy among the majority of Muslim intellectuals advocating for democracy and civil society remain as a serious academic puzzle.

In attempting to solve this puzzle, I have put the political Islamic thought in Turkey since the 1990s under scrutiny. I aimed to shed light on the ideological transformation of the Islamic movement in Turkey by focusing directly on the ideas of Islamic intelligentsia. My research suggested Yeni Zemin as a platform of dynamic debates among Muslim intellectuals of different ideological tendencies such as Mehmet Metiner's liberal interpretations of Islam, Ali Bulaç's apprehension of Islam as an alternative modernity and Atasoy Müftüoğlu's more traditional *tawhidi* understanding of Islam. Therefore, in order to limit the scope of the study, I decided to focus on Yeni Zemin. I analyzed Yeni Zemin to explore the Islamic political thought of the 1990s and tracked down the trajectories of the magazine's prolific and influential authors since the late 1990s to the end of 2014 to examine the ideological transformation in the Islamic movement. The analysis of Muslim intellectuals' writings was based on a content analysis which enabled me to observe overlapping and conflicting themes and arguments as well as discursive shifts and continuities in these writings.

Throughout the empirical chapters (III, IV and V) I have delineated Muslim intellectuals' conceptions of the state; their reservations for the relationship between the political system, civil society and democracy in Turkey; and their deliberations about the Kurdish question as a concrete problem concerning the state and democracy in Turkey. In Chapter III, I have described the Islamist critique of the existing political system in Yeni Zemin. The most salient discourse in Yeni Zemin, "the discourse of change" called for a thoroughgoing transformation in Turkey which had to start by reorganizing the state establishment. The (post) Islamist approach of Yeni Zemin ceded the idea of establishing an Islamic state and propounded a pluralist socio-political system. In response to the exclusion of the Islamic segments by the political system, Yeni Zemin authors developed a counter-hegemonic discourse accentuating the necessity of a larger

autonomous civil society and of a minimum state. Their distaste with the modern nation-state establishment in Turkey transpired most clearly in their debates on democracy and the Kurdish question. Thus, my analysis has demonstrated that Yeni Zemin offered a radical and ambitious critique of the state in the 1990s.

Chapter IV was designed to lay out the impact of February 28 military intervention on Islamic political thought. The analysis of the writings of major Yeni Zemin authors in the aftermath of February 28 (1998-2005) has suggested that the Islamist critique of the system had moderated in this period. Muslim intellectuals reformulated their critique of the political system in Turkey based on the predicaments of the state persecution that hit hard the Islamic segments. In this period, Muslim intellectuals highlight mainly the rule of law, human rights and the impact of the EU process on democratization in Turkey. Although the Islamist critique appeared moderate compared to the radical opposition of Yeni Zemin, Muslim intellectuals had not yet been integrated to the existing political system. Rather they sought for opportunities to reform the system. Nevertheless, their critical stance vis-à-vis the system, albeit less radical, contradicted with their respond to the accommodationist strategy of the Islamic political movement. Although the AKP appeared as a political party in adequacy with its self-designated conservative democratic identity, most Yeni Zemin authors assented to the party's political agenda. I have put forth this contradiction as the marker of Islamic political thought in the aftermath of February 28.

Finally, in Chapter V, I have argued that the moderation of Islamic political thought has crystallized after 2008 as the AKP takes root in the state establishment and became the most dominant actor of the political system in Turkey. The tension between Muslim intellectuals' stance vis-à-vis the system and their attitudes towards the AKP is mostly resolved as most Muslim intellectuals abandon their critical stance against the state. Nevertheless, the AKP's

consolidation of power has a dual impact on Muslim intellectuals. On the one hand, the intellectuals established close ties with the AKP adjusted their discourse from a critical one to a moderate or compliant one. On the other hand, those who are persistent in their critique of the existing socio-political system remain distant from the AKP as well as from their fellows in Yeni Zemin.

As the Islamic segments of the society enjoy recognition by the state establishment and are integrated into the political system through various ways, the Islamist critique of the system has ceased to be a voice advocating the autonomy of civil society against the state. Their engagement with the active party politics, which they used to avoid in Yeni Zemin and even to a great extend in the aftermath of February 28, is one of the factors indicating Muslim intellectuals' acquiescence of the existing political system. In order to depict the trajectory of Islamic political thought in the period between 2008 and 2014, I have focused on Muslim intellectuals' themes of predilection and observed that most intellectuals do not take up themes they used to highlight in their critique of the state establishment. The clearest example is the state's involvement into the dissemination of religion through public institutions and religious education in schools. After 2008, Muslim intellectuals do not question the legitimacy of the state's apparatuses such as DİB, RTÜK and YÖK in intervening religion, education and other fields that Muslim intellectuals designated within the civil societal domain in Yeni Zemin. Thus, if the discourse of Yeni Zemin can be described as contentious, outspoken and ambitious, Muslim intellectuals' discourses after 2008 are rather subdued and refrain from criticizing the system. In fact, Chapter V was the most difficult part in writing this thesis for this reason.

Chapter V has further demonstrated that the global financial crisis of 2008 appears as a significant factor regarding Muslim intellectuals' discussions on democracy. The deteriorating

world economy not only cripples the trust for economic liberalism but also undermines the political and ideological hegemony of political liberalism since the end of the Cold War. The waning emphasis on liberal democratic values such as pluralism, human rights and individual liberties in the discourses of Muslim intellectuals signifies the decline of political liberalism's impact on Islamic political thought. For instance, Abdurrahman Dilipak associates the 2008 crisis with the failure of designating liberal democracy as the ultimate political system in the history by Francis Fukuyama. In a similar vein, Ali Bulaç's discontent with the Western democracies which evidently grows in the aftermath of the crisis as discussed in Chapter V indicate the diminishing influence of Western political thought on Muslim intellectuals in Turkey. Nevertheless, the immediate abandonment of the concepts and values associated to liberal democracy also stems from Muslim intellectuals' pragmatic lenience towards the notion of democracy. As democracy is often embraced as a discursive tool to articulate the Islamic segments' demand for recognition, once the Islamic segments were integrated into the system during AKP rule, democracy has ceased to be an instrument of critique of the existing political system in Turkey in the discourses of Muslim intellectuals'. After 2008, democracy becomes a means to solidify the place of Islamic segments and the legitimacy of the AKP within the socio-political system.

Consequently, in the discourses of Muslim intellectuals, the critique of the state establishment is moderated during the AKP rule. Islamic political thought of the 1990s which held the state accountable for all the problems in Turkey and pointed out to the necessity of changing the political system altogether is replaced by a more state-centric and conservative discourse in the early 2010s. Mehmet Metiner's approach to the Kurdish problem is *inter alia* a dramatic example of the shift in Muslim intellectuals' discourses. Both in Yeni Zemin and in the aftermath of February 28, Metiner stated clearly that the PKK is only the end result of the state's

misdeeds and would disappear after the political and legal regulations are completed to solve the Kurdish question. In 2011, however, he laid the PKK's armistice down as a condition for a political solution of the problem. Similarly, Muslim intellectuals' deliberations about the political problems and public debates indicate that they perceive and interpret the problems and debates through the glance of the AKP. The examples of Abdurrahman Dilipak and Rasim Özdenören, both of whom designate the party as the representative of the "demands of change" in the political landscape of Turkey, are illustrative. Since Muslim intellectuals have established a particular discourse based on presumed demands of change of popular masses in Turkey, intellectuals such as Dilipak and Özdenören, along with the AKP members Yalçın Akdoğan and Mehmet Metiner, associate their ideals with the party which they see as implementing the popular demands. This association was not explicit during the aftermath of February 28. Despite their positive attitude towards the AKP, except Yalçın Akdoğan, they mostly appeared as independent intellectuals in the sense that they were not affiliated to the party, officially or unofficially.

However, although Muslim intellectuals conceive of the AKP as the true representative of the people, or at least its Islamic segments, the AKP is also at the core of the political system in Turkey. The state and the AKP have become strongly associated, particularly after 2008. Thus, "seeing through the eyes of the AKP" refers to "seeing through the eyes of the state" as well. In other words, as the AKP takes root in the state, Muslim intellectuals close to the party become "state-centric". In the last analysis, the discursive shifts in the Islamic political thought after 2008 do not refer to a turning back to (post) Islamism of the 1990s. Rather, these shifts indicate the integration of Muslim intellectuals' discourses into the existing socio-political system in Turkey. Thus, when it comes to Muslim intellectuals in Turkey, the process of moderation, when defined

as the integration of a radical opposition group in to the system has started with the February 28 and crystallized during the height of the AKP rule.

The studies on Islamic moderation fall inadequate to explain these transformations in the Islamic political thought for several reasons. First, they mostly ignore the role of the Islamic intelligentsia both in shaping and reflecting the Islamic worldview. The scope of the analyses of political Islam in Turkey is often limited to political actors whose discourses do not necessarily reflect ideological positions. Therefore, the superficial discussions on the Islamic intelligentsia do not provide an adequate understanding of Islamic political thought in different periods. The inefficacy of the studies becomes clearly manifest in the interpretations of the transformation of Islamic political thought in the 1990s. By contrast my findings suggest that the Islamism of 1990s in Turkey was not a conservative ideology which complied with the existing political system. As such it did not forthrightly facilitate a political movement accommodating to the system.

Second, the accommodationist strategies are not necessarily conducive to democratization when the existing political system is only partially democratic, as in Turkey. In fact, Muslim intellectuals' critique of the state both in Yeni Zemin and in the aftermath of February 28 stemmed from the predicament of democracy in Turkey. The intellectuals employ liberal democratic values and concepts in their discourses to attack the state establishment during these periods. As stated, Muslim intellectuals mostly abandon such positions after 2008 for several reasons. Nevertheless, their abandonment of democratic values and concepts also illustrates that the integration of a dissenting discourse in the existing system do not consolidate democracy.

Third, the transformative role of the AKP among the Islamic segments as well as the Islamic intelligentsia, as the party brings these dissenting social groups into the center of socio-

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political system, is often missed in the existing scholarship. The studies point out to the 1990s as the start of Islamic moderation and to February 28 and foundation of the AKP as the culmination of this process. However, my findings suggest that moderation in Islamic political thought started after February 28 and increasingly continued during the AKP rule. In fact, the duration of the AKP rule appears as the most significant factor in the process of ideological moderation. Thus, my analysis of the writings of Muslim intellectuals in Chapter IV and Chapter V confirms the original position of moderation theory holding that ideological moderation accompanies the behavioral moderation.

Nonetheless, this study does not explain the mechanisms through which the AKP established hegemony over the Islamic segments of the society. Therefore, it mostly remains as a single-sided story of the Islamic moderation which relies mostly on the contextual factors highlighted by the secondary literature. As such, it presents a complementary narrative to the existing studies and should be read together with the accounts of the Islamic movement's political trajectory in Turkey. Another limitation of the thesis regards the representativeness of Yeni Zemin authors in the Islamic political thought in Turkey. Although the magazine was a highly rich platform which brought together Muslim intellectuals with diverse ideological tendencies, there have been different ideological currents represented in different magazines within the Islamic movement in Turkey. Therefore, the present thesis should be tested, corroborated or criticized with further studies with broader scopes.

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