

THE CHANGE IN OFFICIAL ISLAM IN TURKEY: AN ANALYSIS OF FRIDAY  
SERMONS PUBLISHED BY THE PRESIDENCY OF RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS

by

ÖMER AKALIN

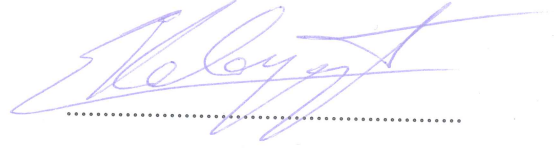
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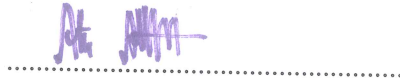
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## ABSTRACT

### THE CHANGE IN OFFICIAL ISLAM IN TURKEY: AN ANALYSIS OF FRIDAY SERMONS PUBLISHED BY THE PRESIDENCY OF RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS

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M.A. Thesis, August 2016

Thesis Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Ersin Kalaycıođlu

**Keywords:** Kemalism, political Islam, Diyanet, sermon, desecularization

The cleavage between the secular Kemalists and the political Islamists has been salient throughout the history of Republican Turkey. On the one hand, an identity based on Turkish nationalism and laicism put forward by the Kemalist elite during the inception of the Republic has been prevalent in state institutions. On the other hand, a movement which aims to revive Islam as an identity both socially and politically has risen in response to this Kemalist project. An important institution established during the early years of the Republic, which aimed at disseminating official Islam, is the Presidency of Religious Affairs (Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı, DİB). Within the context of the Kemalist-Islamist cleavage, this thesis aims to show how the official Islam adopted by the DİB has changed. Specifically, the DİB has moved from representing the Kemalist idea of Islam to representing the version of Islam adopted by the Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, AKP), successors to the political Islam movement. The thesis argues that AKP has achieved this change through a process of “desecularization”, once it reached “commanding heights” after the 2010 Constitutional Referendum. To show this change, 696 Friday sermons published by the Istanbul Müftü’s Office (İstanbul İl Müftülüđü) are analyzed using a mixed methods approach. The analysis finds that there is a clear distinction between the two periods analyzed across various themes, such as the idea of the nation, ethnicity, terrorism and science.

## ÖZET

### TÜRKİYE’ DE RESMİ İSLAM’ IN DEĞİŞİMİ: DİYANET İŞLERİ BAŞKANLIĞI TARAFINDAN HAZIRLANAN HUTBELER ÜZERİNE BİR İNCELEME

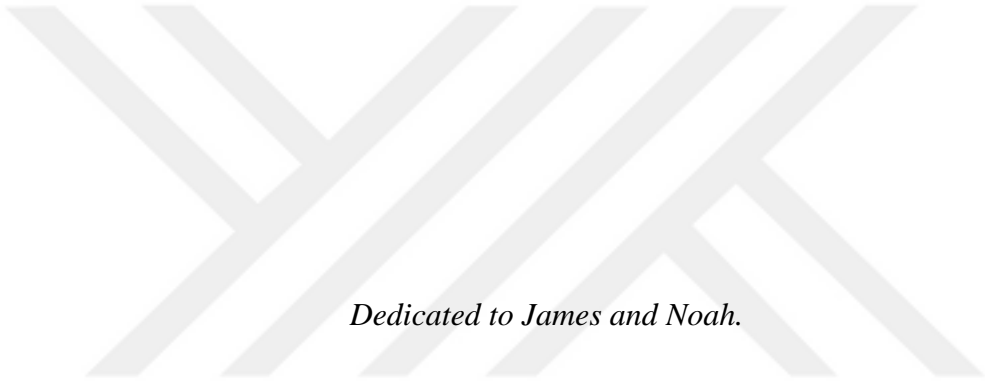
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**Keywords:** Kemalizm, siyasal İslam, Diyanet, hutbe, desekülerleşme

Cumhuriyet’in kuruluşundan itibaren süregelen, Kemalizm ve siyasal İslamcılık arasındaki çatışma siyaset bilimi literatüründe geniş yer bulmuştur. Bir tarafta Cumhuriyet’in kuruluşu esnasında öne sürülmüş, laiklik ve Türk Milliyetçiliği üzerine kurulu Kemalizm analizi, diğer tarafta ise, toplumsal anlamda İslam’ın gitgide azalan rolüne ve Kemalizm’in laiklik anlayışına karşı çıkan siyasal İslam anlayışı mevcut. Toplumun, Kemalizm tarafından ortaya sürülmüş bu İslam anlayışını benimseyebilmesi ve devletin din işleri üzerinde himaye kurabilmesi açısından Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı (DİB) önemli bir role sahiptir. Bu tezin amacı, Kemalizm ve İslam çatışması bağlamında DİB içerisinde değişen İslam anlayışını incelemek. Özetle, DİB’nin İslam anlayışı, Cumhuriyet’in kuruluşundan itibaren yaymakla yükümlü olduğu Kemalist İslam’dan, Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi’nin temsil ettiği siyasal İslam’a doğru kaymıştır. Bu değişimin sebebi ise, AKP’nin 2010 Anayasa Referandumu ile siyasi gücünü konsolide ettikten sonra DİB’ni “desekülerleştirme” sidir. Bu değişimi gösterebilmek için, İstanbul İl Müftülüğü’nce hazırlanmış 696 Cuma hutbesi, söylem analizi ve içerik analizi metodları kullanılarak incelenmiştir. Bu incelemenin sonucunda, Türklük, etnik kimlik, terörizm ve bilim gibi kavramların ele alınmasında iki dönem arasında önemli farklılıklar gözlemlenmiştir.



*Dedicated to James and Noah.*

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

One of the most significant cleavages in Turkish history has been that between the laicist Kemalists and the Sunni Political Islamists. The laicist reforms which were undertaken during the establishment of the Republic were met with resentment by a majority of the public, who still had considerable ties to the traditional and pious way of life left as a heritage from the Ottoman Empire. Since the inception of the Republic, on the one hand there have been the Kemalist institutions which have seen themselves as the guardian of the state and Atatürk's laicist reforms and blocked the entrance of Islam into the public and political arena; on the other hand, there are the political Islamists, who have attempted to voice their grievances stemming from these reforms which have hindered their expression of religious life through various movements and political parties.

One institution which was instrumental in disseminating the Kemalist idea of the Turkish-Islamic synthesis was the Presidency of Religious Affairs (Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı, hereafter DİB). Quite differently from its Ottoman predecessors such as the Office of the Şeyhülislam, this institution has no bearing in government affairs and has been responsible for administering mosques, appointing prayer leaders (imam) and Qur'an reciters (hatip) and, most importantly, preparing sermons to be orated in mosques throughout Turkey.

It seems quite inevitable that the content of these sermons may be subject to change depending on the governing parties. This idea brings about the research question of this paper: with the coming to power of the Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, AKP), has the content of sermons (hutbe) prepared by the DİB

changed to reflect less of the Kemalist Islamic-Turkish synthesis and reformist ideals? Has the AKP, coming from the strand of political Islam, which has developed over the years since the inception of the Republic, placed more emphasis on the Islamic world as a whole and less on the nation?

This issue seems relevant to contemporary discussions on whether the AKP represents the strand of ideology that has emerged with what has been called political Islam in the literature (Eligür, 2010; Kalaycıoğlu, 2005; Mardin, 2006). Given that the AKP, since its incumbency, has been at odds with the Kemalist state, particularly with the judiciary and the military, it is evident that the Kemalists believe that they pose a threat to the laicist principle the Turkish nation was founded upon. This being the case, it seems most likely that the AKP would reflect its idea of Islam through the state apparatus which regulates Islam in society, the DİB. A number of recent studies have argued that the DİB has experienced a significantly different political route under the AKP rule, with the institution experiencing an increase in both its resources, and a widening of its functions. These changes seemed to have led the DİB to compose statements which are in line with the AKP ideology (Cornell and Kaya, 2015; Yanarocak, 2015). These studies, however, do not analyze the content of sermons prepared by the DİB.

Some studies have analyzed the content and preparation of sermons published by the DİB. Kenar (2011) analyzes the factors taken into consideration when preparing sermons and procedural measures taken by the DİB for these sermons to be orated in a systematic manner, coming to the conclusion that these procedures are aimed at rendering the DİB an institution which is effectively able to regulate religion in accordance with the official ideology of the state. Similarly, Saçmal (2013) assesses the role of DİB officials in the preparation of Friday sermons at the nexus of the state, government and society; his conclusion is that officials who are responsible for the preparation of sermons are in fact passive agents in this capacity, and are driven to self-censorship in order to comply with the demands of the aforementioned actors. The study further assesses some of the sermons prepared by the DİB to suggest the existence of a national religious discourse within these sermons; a brief suggestion of the study is that this national religious discourse changes with the AKP in government, though this is not backed with sermon content.

In a more relevant approach, an analysis of the content of sermons is taken up by Gürpınar and Kenar (2016). The study finds a number of themes (such as morals for a nation, the Islamic streak in Turkish History and anarchy) prevalent in the sermons prepared and disseminated starting from the end of the single-party era (1950) up until the 1980's. Their argument is that even towards the end of the single-party era in 1945, the state has continued to regulate religion through the DİB and sermons prepared by it in a similar manner to the Kemalist elite prior to the multi-party era, producing an idea of religion subservient to the state. Though they briefly state that the AKP took up this tradition of utilizing the DİB to instill in society its own interpretation of Islam, they do not substantiate this claim further by analyzing sermons prepared during this period. This dissertation aims to provide an addition to the literature by propounding upon this idea.

The argument of this thesis is that there has been a major change in sermon content to reflect the AKP's idea of Islam, and a diversion from Kemalism and Turkish-Islamic synthesis. The reason for such a diversion is due to the increasing influence of the AKP on the state institutions and specifically on the DİB. This has been a gradual process which has been accelerated by political events such as the 2008 Party Closure Case, the 2010 Constitutional Referendum, and the AKP's weakening of the military through various court cases and legal arrangements.

Since the 2010 Constitutional Referendum amended the organization of the Constitutional Court and the High Council of Judges and Prosecutors, the consolidation of the AKP's power over the secular institutions of the state coincided with a change in the presidency in the DİB. Thus 2010 needs to be considered a turning point with regards to the content of sermons within this study. The change has occurred through the appointment of a President of the DİB (Mehmet Görmez) by a more conservative President of Turkey, Abdullah Gül, in 2010. By contrast, the previous term had seen a President of the DİB (Ali Bardakoğlu) more sympathetic to Kemalism and its idea of Turkish-Islamic synthesis, who was appointed by a staunchly secular President, Ahmet Necdet Sezer, in 2003. Bardakoğlu left his position in 2010 and was replaced by the then vice president of the DİB Görmez.

In order to observe this difference, a total of 687 sermons which were prepared by the DİB during both periods and made available through their website will be

analyzed to see how frequently words which emphasize national values and Kemalist ideals occur. The frequencies of these words will then be contextually analyzed. This analysis will also be supported by looking at the statements and published works of each DİB president, to see whether they reflect the ideas in the sermons occurring in their respective periods.

Accordingly, the rest of this dissertation will be organized as follows: the second chapter will provide a historical account of the two sides of the secular-Kemalist and political Islam cleavage in order to present the understanding of Islam present in the two periods that will be analyzed. The third chapter will discuss the literature on how the AKP has consolidated its regime, and the effect this consolidation has had on the DİB. The fourth chapter will briefly discuss the history and function of the DİB, and then proceed to analyze the sermons in the two consecutive periods of 2003-2010 and 2010-2016 to assess whether there has been change in the discourse; this analysis will be supported by publications and statements made by the respective presidents of the DİB in each period. The fifth and final chapter will provide concluding remarks and discuss how further studies can contribute to the literature on the DİB.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1 The DİB and Its Sermons in the Literature

A substantial number of studies have been undertaken with regard to the DİB, especially in recent years. However, only a number of these assess the capacity of the DİB as a political institution. This is not surprising, since it is difficult to find politicized elements in an institution which is explicitly banned in its legal framework from engaging in politics.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, it seems inevitable that an institution which is under the auspices of the state would not (even to some extent) reflect the ideology of various political agents who hold power. Nevertheless, a number of studies have reflected on the history of the institution and the Kemalist version of Islam which it was established to disseminate.

One line of inquiry in the literature on the DİB focuses on the purpose of its establishment and whether it is compatible with the laicist principle of the state. Gözaydın (2008) discusses how the DİB was established by the Kemalist elite in order to take religion under state control, as religion was seen as a remnant of the Ottoman Empire and a threat to the legitimacy of the sovereignty of the Republic being vested in the nation (rather than on Islamic principles). It is noted that, being established as an institution with limited authority, the DİB has seen its functions expand as new parties came into power after the one-party era; towards the end of the CHP government in 1950, the management of mosques and prayer rooms, which was previously the responsibility of the Presidency General for Foundations (Vakıflar

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<sup>1</sup> Article 25 of Act Regulating the Establishment and Function of the Presidency of Religious Affairs states that, other legal sanctions regarding the duty of public officials notwithstanding, it is forbidden for officials working for the DİB to praise or criticize any political party or their actions (Republic of Turkey, 1965).

Genel Müdürlüğü), was given back to the DİB, and in 1965, a period in which the Justice Party had a majority in government, the function of the institution was broadened to include “[carrying] out affairs related to the beliefs, prayers and moral foundations of Islam, [enlightening] society about religion and [managing] places of prayer”(Gözaydın, 2008, p.220).

With differing policies over time regarding the function of the diyanet, it is argued that the institution has become somewhat politicized based on the respective governments’ position on how much of a role religion should play in the public. It is thus argued that the DİB was not an laicist institution at all, as it has adopted various versions of Islam since its inception, and excluded some minorities (such as Alevis or Shiites) in the provision of its services; this, according to Gözaydın (2008), is not in line with secularism, as a secular state should be equally distant to all religions practiced among the public. On the other hand, Bardakoğlu (2008), the previous president of the DİB, argues that the institution is in fact compatible with secularism, because according to his conceptualization, secularism implies a relation based on mutual respect of the state and religion. Bardakoğlu (2008) also bases his argument on the assessment of the Constitutional Court (Anayasa Mahkemesi, AYM) that the DİB does not contradict the principle of secularism on the grounds that it provides non-discriminatory freedom to all faiths in society. Again, however, this is based on a very specific definition of secularism and does not consider the fact the DİB only endorses one version of Islam as the proper one, namely Sunni Islam, and by this very fact is closer to one version of it than others. Ulutaş (2010) criticizes this definition of secularism, and hence the compatibility of the DİB with secularism in Turkey; he argues that what Bardakoğlu (2008) defines is in fact toleration, and thus is far from providing a satisfactory account to the long winded debate on secularism and the DİB.

Görmez (2012) makes a different argument which points to how the relationship between secularism and religion in Turkey is unique, within the context of the DİB. It points to the fact that religion is reflected in both society and the individual’s inner world, and thus the new understanding of secularism and thus policy making cannot ignore the role of religion in everyday life. Although this argument does not escape the criticism that the DİB has a sectarian disposition, it does provide a framework for understanding the role of the DİB in state policies throughout its history. In a similar

manner, Erdem (2008) argues that this particular way of organizing the state and religious affairs is a legacy of the Ottoman Empire, since the Ministry of Religious Affairs (Şeriyye ve Evkaf Vekaleti) acted as a bridge between the Office of the Şeyhülislam and the DİB. This argument, however, may be eluded by the fact that the Office of the Şeyhülislam had much more influence on the Ottoman state than the DİB has on political affairs within Turkey.

One important study, which is undertaken by Bozan and Çakır (2005), reveals some interesting facts about the independent nature of the DİB and how much political interference is present both in appointments to the institution and in publications (such as sermons), based on a large number of interviews with statesmen, DİB employees and presidents and individuals attending prayers at mosques in Turkey. One conclusion the study reaches based on the interviews is that there is political interference to some extent in appointments in the DİB; the interviewers themselves experienced this firsthand when one provincial Müftü was called by three different members of parliament during the interview with regards to issues regarding a number of DİB employees. Additionally, interviews with individuals who attend prayer revealed that the view that the DİB comes under the influence of different governments and government institutions is quite prevalent (Bozan and Çakır, 2005).

Interviews with various politicians reveal that there are some issues on which AKP and CHP politicians diverge with regards to the DİB. While all AKP politicians interviewed consider the DİB a necessary institution, some regard it as a relic of the understanding of Islam that was dominant during the establishment of the Republic, and that the institution is a “Government Bureau for Conducting Prayer”. On the other hand, the CHP politicians criticize the DİB on its sectarian stance because it does not provide the religious services provided for the Sunni Muslims to Muslims of other sects, such as Alevis and Shiites. Finally, interviews with various Islamic brotherhoods and Islamists reveal their belief that sermons are centralized mainly for political reasons, and that this practice may reveal distrust in the employees of the DİB in the way that they are incompetent in delivering sermons in appropriate manner; various scholars and high-level DİB employees also claim that at times, various government institutions have requested sermons prepared by the DİB to focus on certain topics, while also noting that various presidents of the DİB have

been actively involved in politics before and after their position within the institution (Bozan and Çakır, 2005).

A number of studies have been undertaken which deal with the content and production of sermons by the DİB. An important study within this context is that of Gibbon (2008), who conducts a content analysis of sermons published by the DİB to see how the concept of god is thought through these sermons. The conclusion is that sermons within the period in which Ali Bardakoğlu was the president of the DİB contain much more minimally counter-intuitive conceptions of god (minimally counter-intuitive being defined as showing more human traits), and in this sense have considerable influence over how individuals understand religious concepts and teachings. This being the case, the idea that sermons are an effective way of determining how religion is understood in society seem to form the basis of further studies which aim to understand the political and sociological nature of sermons and whether they are used to teach a certain type of religion as opposed to another.

To this end, Kenar (2011) analyzes how a certain nation-statist Islam has been adopted and taught to the public through sermons which emphasize the Kemalist understanding of both the nation and religion. Contrary to some studies arguing that the DİB is a non-partisan and secular institution, Kenar (2011) notes that the DİB is in fact in favour of one understanding of Islam that was presented by the Kemalist elite during the establishment of the Republic, and the teaching of this understanding of Islam has been complimented by the fact that Imams who orate these sermons are compliant with the text that is provided to them by the DİB. This is achieved through various legal measures that are taken that prevent imams from engaging in political life even in their private lives; interviews with imams also revealed that certain informal measures undertaken by the military, such as raiding Qur'an courses, or the imams' concern that a member of the congregation may file a complaint if the imam orates the sermon more liberally also play a role in their compliance.

Another study which corroborates Kenar's (2011) findings is undertaken by Saçmalı (2013), who argues that the activities of the DİB are shaped by various actors including the government, the state and society. Saçmalı (2013) argues that the officials who prepare the sermons to be read in Friday prayers are passive actors and are complaint to the demands of the various actors mentioned previously. In this



context, the officials refrain from including topics in sermons which may stir debate among the public, and are receptive to the ideology of the current government when preparing the sermons. Saçmalı (2013) notes for instance that, while attending one of the meetings of a committee responsible for preparing sermons in Istanbul, the committee decided to remove a passage from a sermon that stated that an important responsibility of a Muslim is to protect the motherland and the nation, arguing that the DİB is responsible for teaching religion and not national values. Interestingly, Saçmalı (2013) notes that during the AKP government's incumbency, there has been a change in the understanding of nationalism which diverges from the Kemalist understanding of the nation-state that encompasses only Turks; the new understanding aims to include also in the new idea of the nation-state the minorities in the country, namely the Kurdish population.

Gürpınar and Kenar (2016) focus on the content of sermons throughout the history of the DİB and emphasize some of the common themes that were present in different periods. In the single-party era, the main themes that were covered were the unity of the nation, the fusion of the idea of a Turkish nation-state and the use of Islam as a code of morality. Interestingly, the study finds that the sermons did not diverge from the previous period with regards to content after transition to the multi-party politics in 1950; Gürpınar and Kenar (2016), in their analysis of 1302 sermons prepared between 1962 to 2006, notice continuity in the way the nation and Islam are portrayed as compatible and even complementary, although they also observe that most sermons deal with strictly religious issues such as the beauty of the Qur'an and the deeds of the prophet. The finding is significant since it provides evidence for the DİB's independence from the agenda of different governments over time. However, the sermons analyzed are taken from the Diyanet's periodicals (Diyanet Gazetesi and Diyanet Aylık Dergisi), which are mostly guiding texts as opposed to the centrally prepared texts that require strict adherence to the contents of the sermon.

One more recent report prepared by the HYD (2014), similar to Bozan and Çakır (2005), takes a general look at the performance of the DİB within the context of the public and its relations with the political arena in a structural manner. Specifically, the report looks at the political and sociological role of the institution through its policies on sermons (both hutbe and vaaz) and the content within these sermons. This interesting analysis reveals that nationalism has been a prevalent topic in the

sermons, and that the Kemalist ideology which gives Islam a complementary role alongside national identity has been replaced with a more encompassing idea of the nation based on Islam during the AKP's term in government; before national and cultural identities other than being Turkish were not acknowledged in sermons, the new understanding of nationalism during the AKP period which included all Muslim people within the country saw manifestation in the sermons prepared during this period. Additionally, roundtable meetings conducted with various NGOs, Provincial Müftü's Office officials and representatives from local media outlets and universities in 11 different provinces reveals that some attendees were unhappy with the fact that nationalism was a topic covered too frequently in sermons. The report also notes how Mehmet Görmez distinguishes himself from previous presidents of the DİB by endorsing a certain position on political issues, and that the presidents of the DİB during the AKP period have been influential on the institution as a whole (HYD, 2014).

A number of articles further study the activities and stance of the DİB within the AKP period. Cornell and Kaya (2015) observe, for instance, that the AKP has increasingly attempted to control the state institution that is the main tool of propagating official Islam in Turkey. They state that the DİB has seen significant growth in its resources during the AKP's term in government, with a budget of \$2 million and employees numbering 120,000. Moreover, it is observed that the AKP has attempted to politicize the institution by attempting to pull it into the political arena, to which the president of the DİB at the time, Ali Bardakoğlu, responded by saying any statement made by the institution would undermine the secular nature of it. Consequently, the AKP appointed a president that was closer to the ideological position to its own, Mehmet Görmez. It is also claimed that sermons issued by the institution have praised the AKP and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, the current President of Turkey, though this claim is not substantiated any further. More importantly, however, the article notes that state institutions, including the DİB, have come increasingly under the influence of the Nakşibendi-Halidi version of Islam under the AKP (Cornell and Kaya, 2015).

Similarly, Yanarocak (2015) observes that since the AKP came to government, Islam has seen its public appearance increase; the decision to end the ban on headscarves in 2011 and the removal of Kemalism as the guiding principle of the education system

in 2012 have been milestones in this regard. Increasing the visibility and resources of the DİB has been part of this agenda, according to Yanarocak (2015). To this end, Yanarocak (2015) notes that the fetva hotline established in 2012 seeks to involve Islam in the daily lives of Muslims to a greater extent, and the DİB's statements on playing the lottery, feeding dogs at home and abortion are attempts at harmonizing the lives of individuals with Islamic principles.

In conclusion, the literature on the DİB tends to be focused around three general themes. The first is whether the institution is compatible with the principle of secularism which is a fundamental idea of both Kemalism and the Constitution of Turkey. The various arguments are based on how secularism is defined, though a strict definition of the term and historical evidence seem to point the fact that there is an inherent tension between the two (Gözaydın, 2008; Ulutaş, 2010). Noteworthy here is the exclusion of certain religious minorities, such as Alevis, Shiites and non-Muslims, in the services provided by the institution. The second theme is centred around the structure and performance of the DİB, especially in relation to the political circumstances of the period. The sermons issued by the DİB have been studied by various authors to reveal that they conform (to some extent) to the political agenda of the period, ranging from Kemalist ideas of the nation-state to a more inclusive idea of Islam; it is argued that this is also a product of DİB officials conforming to the demands of various actors, such as the government and the Kemalist state elite (Kenar, 2011; Saçmal, 2013). Finally, the last theme in the literature on the DİB focuses on the AKP's influence over the institution. The general trend here is that the resources and role of the institution in guiding the daily life of Muslims has increased significantly after the AKP coming to power (Cornell and Kaya, 2015; Yanarocak, 2015).

As the literature on Kemalism and political Islam throughout the history of Turkey is extensive, the two ideologies and the themes present in them will be provided in the next section.

## **2.2 Two Versions of Official Islam**

The cleavage between the secular Kemalists and the Islamists has been one that is quite salient throughout the history of the Republic. Many authors who have studied the history of this cleavage (Davison, 1998; Kalaycıoğlu, 2005, 2011; Mardin, 1973, 2006) trace its origins back to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and the early 20<sup>th</sup> century Ottoman Empire, a period in which different ideologies were put forward for the future of the Empire. In essence, the cleavage rests on the varying emphasis placed on Islam as a political and social driving force, and the different ways it was used to mobilize the Muslim people within the Empire.

On the one hand, there exists a form of Islam which renounces the Ottoman heritage, an Islam nationalized by the state in order to instill a more secular and modern form of Turkish identity by the governing elite of the newly formed Turkish Republic, an identity which would foster Islam as long as it was in harmony with the requirements of a modern nation state and not on its own a politically unifying force; this idea of Islam would also later be endorsed by left and center-left political parties (Özbudun, 1988; Toprak, 1981; Waxman, 2000).

On the other hand, there was the idea of Islam as a political identity, as a reaction to the modernizing and secularizing policies implemented during the establishment of the Republic, and, to some extent, as a revival of the Ottoman legacy; many right and center-right parties would utilize this idea of Islam to varying degrees (Davison, 1998; Kalaycıoğlu, 2005). Although this is not the only cleavage present in Turkish politics, it is nevertheless a prevalent one and one that is useful for the purposes of this study. The next sections will now expound these two ideas of Islam. The next two sections will now turn to these two accounts of Islam in order to understand the relevant themes that will be revealed in the analysis in chapter 4.

### **2.2.1 The Kemalist Tradition: Constructing a National Identity vis-à-vis Islam**

The Kemalist idea of building political identity on the idea of a nation may be dated back to the establishment of the Committee of Union and Progress at the end of the

19<sup>th</sup> century. The Committee housed members who were primarily concerned with the future prospects of the Ottoman Empire. Although members of the committee were in agreement for replacing the absolutist rule of the sultan with a parliamentary system, there seemed to be a number of ideas put forward as to how to consolidate political identity within the new state. Berkes(1964) notes that, among these, one of the earliest proponents of Turkish nationalism was Yusuf Akçura, who was of the opinion that this same idea of nationalism would prevent the Ottoman Empire from keeping together its constituents of diverse ethnic backgrounds, and that the Turks of the Ottoman Empire should similarly strive to unify under their common ethnic heritage.

The more prominent thinker within this camp, and perhaps the one whose ideas resonated the most with that of the founders of the Turkish Republic, was Ziya Gökalp. Gökalp was a proponent of making national culture the foundation of any state to be established in the future, though with less emphasis on ethnicity; indeed, there are claims that Gökalp himself was of Kurdish origin, though this seems trivial since he himself asserts that even if he was not ethnically Turkish, he would still identify as such (Parla, 1985). He believed that this national culture could be reconciled with Islam while still being compatible with modern practices. Nevertheless, he believed that this agglomeration did require a separation of state and religion; according to Davison, Gökalp “believed that the contemporary age was marked, in part, by the loss of religion’s nearly exclusive grip on the institutional and ideational spheres of global and local life”(1998, p.93) and “maintained that the separation between religion and politics was fundamental for the states of the member nations of modern civilization”(1998, p.93). It is easy to see how Gökalp’s ideas had provided a foundation for some of the fundamental principles of the Turkish Republic, and although religion is not renounced in his ideas, it is evident that he believed it should have less of an influence in the public sphere and on state crafting.

During the War of Liberation, before Mustafa Kemal and his followers put forward the agenda of secularization and modernization for the soon to be established Turkish Republic, Islam was in fact used as a rallying call to encourage people to bear arms against the invaders (Kenar, 2011; Yavuz, 2004). This appears to be a sensible decision considering that at this point, for the Ottoman Turks who were yet to

affiliate with any national identity, the most salient distinction between them and the invading forces was religion. It is important to note, however, that this support for resistance did not translate into acceptance of other measures implemented by the founders of the Republic. To this extent, Mardin notes that “The Turkish War of Independence ... had much support from the lower classes insofar as it embodied resistance to a despised invader. The civil aims of the revolutionaries (i.e. the political and social modernization of Turkey), however, were not paralleled by popular demands”(2006, p.193).

Measures taken to reduce the influence of Islam in public life, such as the adoption of the Latin alphabet, reducing the influence of dervish orders and Sufi orders (tarikats) and changing the public dress code so as to limit the use of traditional clothing, among others, were accompanied by institutional changes such as the abolishment of the caliphate, the closing down of the medreses and the replacement of the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Pious Foundations and the Office of the Şeyhülislam with the Presidency of Religious Affairs (DIB). The former reforms directly manipulated the influence Islam had on social life, while the latter were changes that signaled to the people the idea of Islam endorsed by the Republic, and the extent to which the Kemalists wanted Islam to be in the public sphere. What is clear through these reforms however is that rather than separate religion and state, and render religion a matter of personal conscience, the Kemalists had in fact taken control of religion in order to institutionalize and disseminate an idea of Islam that was compatible with the creation of a new national identity and the agenda of modernization. In this sense, Davison (1998) notes that the Kemalist ideal was not anti-religious; clerics and lay persons who were in congruence with Kemalists as to the place of Islam in public life and its modern interpretation were given priority over religious matters in the Republic.

Similar to Davison (2003), this study is inclined towards defining (though not strictly) the Kemalist regime as laicist rather than secular, where laicism does not necessarily exclude religion from operating under some official capacity (even though governance is subject to lay control), which is conversely the case with secularism. Davison (2003, p.336-337) explains the distinction between laicism and secularism as follows:

It is indeed a fine distinction that may not always be evident in practice, but it is a distinction that allows for more mixed relations—of various kinds—between affairs of the world and/or politics and those of religion in laicist arrangements than in secular ones. While laicist political relations may separate affairs of the tradition from the state to some extent and in some ways, they may also retain the religion in a prominent, lay-defined, official role, something not anticipated in the meaning of secular practices or arrangements.

The consequence of such an approach to religion is that it gives the state both an opportunity to regulate Islam and define its place in the national identity, and also a legitimate means of marginalizing proponents of alternative interpretations of Islam and quelling any insubordination that may arise due to such conflicting interpretations. The Turkish state did in fact respond to religious dissent quite harshly; in a protest in Erzurum, 23 protestors within a group of 3,000 lead by a sheikh were killed by local gendarmes after they attempted to petition the Governor of Erzurum to allow them to continue wearing their traditional headgear instead of the government prescribed hats (Brockett, 1998). Similarly, Başkan (2010) notes that Said Nursi, a Muslim scholar who greatly influenced religious movements after the Republican era but who was also seen as a threat to the Republican establishment due to his religious dissidence, had his students distribute handwritten copies of his commentary on the Qur'an (Risale-i Nur) because they were too poor and Said Nursi was in exile at the time.

The fact that the Kemalists and the political party that spearheaded its ideology, the Republican People's Party (Cumhuriyet Halk Fırkası, CHF and later Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi, CHP) relaxed their secularist policies during the multi-party era is evidence for their pragmatic approach to religion. Two reasons are given for this relaxation of secularist policies. One of these is the rising discontent among the population with regards to the states interference with religious practices, and the DP's criticism of this (Kenar, 2011). The second was the threat of communism (Sakallıoğlu, 1996). This period also saw the DP, who had come to power, reform some of the secular policies of the CHP, such as restoring the call to prayer into Arabic (which had been in Turkish during the CHP regime) and re-establishing Prayer Leader and Preacher Schools (Imam-Hatip Okulları), which aimed to educate prayer leaders and preachers, among others.

Nevertheless, the Kemalist ideology still held a stranglehold on the bureaucratic side of religion. The DİB still consisted of individuals who had been placed in the institution by the CHP regime and were still subject to the states Kemalist project, much to their dismay (Ulutaş, 2010). Interestingly, the sermons prepared during this period had not seen any changes in content or outlook. Gürpınar and Kenar (2016), in their study which analyzes the DİB and over a 1,000 sermons issued by it, found that the sermons had not changed substantially in content even with the start of the multi-party era; the DİB continued to issue sermons similar in nature to those prepared from its establishment through to the multi-party era. This seems consistent with the fact that the DİB President throughout the multi-party era, Eyyüp Sabri Hayırlıođlu, had served in the National Assembly as a deputy of the CHP, and had openly praised Atatürk and the Republic in his speeches in Parliament (Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı, 2016a).

Meanwhile, from this period onwards, the Military acted as a bulwark against Islam and its potential entrance into politics. In their study, Davison and Parla (2004, p.235) analyze the speeches and texts of Atatürk to come to the conclusion that the Military was “constituted as an organ to defend not only the state, but the Kemalist state and Kemalism’s understanding of the nationalist foundations of the state”. Davison and Parla (2004) also note that Atatürk saw the capacity of the army as being above the state and beyond the ideology of any single political party. The fact that Army did indeed see itself as such is evident in its intervention into politics with the 1960 and 1980 coups in response to failed governments, the 1971 memorandum and the “Post-modern coup” of 1997; the latter was specifically aimed at forcing Erbakan to relinquish his position as prime minister, due to the perceived threat that he posed to the laicist nature of the state.

Though the Military seems mostly throughout its history to represent hardline Kemalism, it has tolerated and even used Islamic themes throughout various periods. After the 1980 coup, for instance, the Military introduced compulsory religious education in schools and amended legislation that would allow graduates of İmam-Hatip schools to study in any degree program at university. According to Karakaş (2007), the Military emphasized during this period a Turkish-Islamic synthesis which reinvigorated the Islamic tint of the Kemalist Ideology, primarily to re-establish ideas of obedience to authority in the face of the social and political decay that had



occurred since the 1960's and to lessen the influence of non-Turkish interpretations of Islam that were prevalent in countries such as Iran among fears that similar social upheavals may also take place in Turkey. It also aimed to keep in line the Alevi and Kurdish minorities through the DİB, the function of which the Military states is to contribute to "national solidarity and integration"(Karakaş, 2007, p.18). Martyrdom (şehitlik) was also a concept that the military had adopted; a book prepared by Ahmet Hamdi Akseki, the third president of the DİB, upon the request of the military which would educate soldiers on Islam is centered around the idea that Islam is the religion of the Turkish nation, and that serving in the military and possibly becoming a martyr is the highest form of worship (Kenar,2011). This has been a useful way for the military and Kemalists both to rally support during the War of Independence and retain a legitimate standing among the people in its struggle against the Kurdish insurgency after the 1990s.

Both the CHP (and its political offshoots) and the Military have adopted the inheritance of laicism from Kemalism to keep Islam away from the public sphere as much as possible, though the CHP did later relax its stance on religious issues in order to widen its electoral base (Ciddi and Esen, 2014). The *türban* (headscarf) issue took center stage within this context in the 1990's, when the military effectively banned the entrance of individuals donning the turban into universities through the Higher Education Council (Yüksek Öğretim Kurumu, YÖK), the ban already being in place since 1982 for personnel working in public institutions. The Constitutional Court, under Chief Justice Ahmet Necdet Sezer, a staunch Kemalist and laicist who would later become the President, also closed down the Welfare Party and banned Erbakan from politics, with Yavuz(2003) claiming this to be part of the Court's allegiance to the Military and its Kemalist ideology.

The 2000s saw this cleavage swell significantly, when the AKP took up the legacy of political Islam after the closure of the RP; the Virtue Party (Fazilet Partisi) or the Felicity Party (Saadet Partisi) did not seem like realistic contenders for the leading of the political Islam movement, because they continued their anti-system and hardline Islamist rhetoric. Although the AKP defined itself as a center-right conservative party rather than an openly Islamist one, it still did not pass under the radar of the Kemalist state elite as not being a threat to laicism. Soon after it came to power, the AKP attempted to make way for graduates of Prayer Leader and Preacher Schools

(İmam-Hatip Lisesi, İHL) to continue their higher education in non-religious subjects. According to Heper (2006), the military, considering graduates from İHL's to be sympathetic to political Islam, saw this as a move to infiltrate the state bureaucracy from inside, now that these graduates were able to receive further education that would allow them to occupy such positions. Another actor who represented one of the laicist pillars of the state, President Ahmet Necdet Sezer, had in fact vetoed this proposal which would eventually be implemented in 2011.

Both the Constitutional Court and the Turkish military saw their tutelary functions diminish through various reforms and court cases undertaken by the government. The composition of the Constitutional Court, in the aftermath of the AKP's party closure case in 2008, was rearranged with the 2010 Constitutional Referendum so as to include an increased number of members, additional members being appointed by the Turkish Grand National Assembly (Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi, TBMM), effectively increasing the influence of the civilian government over the Military. The judicial reforms of the Referendum also enabled the military officers to be tried in civilian courts, including the Chief of the General Staff of the Turkish Army. The military was also weakened through the Sledgehammer (Balyoz) and Ergenekon cases, with the accused of allegedly plotting a coup against the government; the cases tried a number of military officers, possibly as a pressure to the military to ease its secular opposition against the AKP government.

### **2.2.2 The Revival of Islam as a Social and Political Identity**

As political Islam owes some of its heritage to the Ottoman Empire, it is useful to understand what Islam meant for the people during this period and leading up to the establishment of the Republic. Owing to the ethnic and religious diversity of the subjects of the Empire, the millet system, under which different religious and ethnic groups such as Jews, Greek Orthodox Christians, Gregorian Armenians and Muslims belonged, fulfilled both an administrative and social function. Each millet was subject to its own law and the Empire levied different taxes from the various millets. For the Muslims, the ulema as the religious clergy were responsible for communicating with the public the official Islam, serving as an "informal bridge

between state and society” (Yavuz, 2003). Through the ulema, the state was able to control how Islam was practiced and understood by the public, and dissuade any form of heterodoxy which may jeopardize the loyalty of the Muslim subjects to the state.

Up until the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, there did not seem to be any evidence of nationalist sentiment neither among the public nor the elite members of the state. Indeed, this is understandable considering that there was no appeal to what would now be called Turkish culture; in fact, Kalaycıoğlu (2005) notes that at the time, there was no word in Turkish which coincided with the concept of nationality, the word “millet” later being substituted as the closest alternative. This is also in line with the fact that the Turks were among the last people within the Empire to be acquainted with nationalism. Religion was the only segregating factor for the Turks at the time, who identified as Muslim rather than as part of a nation; as Mardin (2006, p.197) notes, “... religion seems to have been singled out as the core of the system [in the Ottoman Empire]”.

Not surprisingly, the ideologies proposed during the final phases of the Empire emphasized Islam as a unifying ideology and phenomenon. During the Tanzimat period, parallel to the development of Pan-Turkism and Turkish nationalism, some members of the Young Ottomans proposed the idea of Pan-Islamism and Ottomanism, unifying the people of Anatolia, who had become a majority within that region owing to the territorial regression borne of the nationalism of other millets, under the identity of an Ottoman or Muslim citizen. Although both strands of thought were not entirely dismissive of the other and were similar for the most part, the difference was in emphasizing either Turkishness or Islam. Both accepted a synthesis of Islam and Turkishness, though the Islamist camp prioritized the former over the latter in formulating a future for the Ottoman Empire (Çetinsaya, 1999).

These thoughts, however, did not seem to be based on popular demand. Up until this point, the only way in which the populace was acquainted with the ruling elite was through the religious institutions of the state. Mardin (2006, p.199) elaborates on the function of religion as an intermediary between the people and the state as follows:

In the absence of linking institutions, the religious establishment and the pre-patterned political ideology that came with it were used as

substitutes for linkage. In the Ottoman Empire this was quite clearly the case: religion was the mediating link between local social forces and the political structure.

The people would resolve legal disputes through the services of the Kadı appointed by the Şeyhülislam and would attend prayer at mosques where hatips (orators) were appointed by the state (Azak, 2008). This being the case, it is no surprise that the increasing secularization of state institutions left a void in the cultural and social dimensions of the life of the people. This void was what the Kemalist elite capitalized on when establishing the Republic, creating institutions such as the DİB and banning religious garments in public spaces to alter the understanding of Islam the people had espoused to that date.

Naturally, attempting to change the understanding of Islam which had informed the culture of the people so profoundly and was embedded deeply in their lifestyle was a huge challenge and did not go without opposition<sup>2</sup>. The Republican regime attempted to change the ezan, call to prayer, into Turkish in 1932 and met with resistance, with two public protests occurring in the 1930s; Azak (2008) even notes that members of the Ticaniye, a Sufi order originating in Africa led by Kemal Pilavoğlu, travelled throughout Anatolia in order to recite the ezan in Arabic. Similarly, an insurrection in Potemya (now Güneysu), Rize which consisted of a group of 1,000 villagers who were unhappy with the secular reforms of the Kemalist elite and who felt that their religious lifestyle was under threat, attempted to capture a local gendarme post under the leadership of the village headman (muhtar) and imam (Brockett, 1998).

Though this opposition did not, on the whole, pose a significant threat to the Kemalist elite, it did manifest itself in Islamic movements which were conceived at the grassroots level. Reactionary Islam, during the establishment of the Republic, did not appear among the elite; it is safe to assume that, after the closure of the Progressive Republican Party (Terakkiperver Cumhuriyet Fırkası, TCF) and the deputies of this party being put on trial, those at the government level were well aware of the consequences of opposing reforms at this point. Nor did the knowledgeable Islamic mystics appear in the religious hierarchy of the state,

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<sup>2</sup>For an analysis of popular protest against the Kemalist Government's reforms, see Brockett (1998).

according to practicing muslims (Mardin, 2006). The most significant of these reactionary figures were members (or leaders) of tarikats and Islamic brotherhoods.

Where the state had oppressed or banned religious expression, the tarikats provided people with an outlet, or, according to Yavuz (2003, p.57), “encouraged the process of withdrawal and the creation of an inner world of faith”. This Islam that was practiced and explored behind closed doors would later manifest itself as the political Islam which emerged after the late 70’s. The most important of these tarikats were the Nakşibendi and Nurcu movement. The Nakşibendi tarikat was part of the Sufi tradition, a tradition in Islam which relies heavily on spiritual teachings and a focus on the ‘true’ meaning of the Qur’an. Though the movement originated in Turkistan through founder Nakşibend of Turkistan, its many disciples travelled throughout Central Asia, Crimea and the Balkans to disseminate its teachings. Eventually, the movement also arrived in the Ottoman Empire through Sheik Khalid, who pursued a policy of recruiting state officials, most likely to disseminate the teachings of the order (Yavuz, 2003).

Said Nursi was also a follower of this movement, and was influential in forming the ideas of the political personalities who spearheaded the revival of political Islam later in the century. The compelling nature of Nursi’s thoughts, according to Mardin (2006), was that they did not require Islam to be reformed in order for it to be compatible with modern life. Nursi’s idea of statehood was also less informed by the new Turkish nation and more of the traditional ways of the Ottoman Empire (Mardin, 2006). Interestingly, such appeals by right wing parties to the traditional Ottoman way of governing are evident towards the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century; Kalaycıoğlu (2005) notes that some political Islamist Welfare Party (Refah Partisi, RP) politicians during the 1980s had proposed a multi-confessional legal system that was very similar to the Ottoman millet system, most likely informed by the traditional Islam Nursi formulated as a resurgence of Islam as a public identity.

Fethullah Gülen, a former preacher and Islamic scholar, was heavily influenced by Nursi and formed a movement based on his teachings. He received religious education and held numerous positions as a preacher throughout Turkey. An interesting aspect of Gülen’s thought is the appeal to the Ottoman-Turkish strand in Turkish history, according to Mardin (2006), though Yavuz (2003) characterizes

Gülen as Turkish nationalist and even statist, considering his influence on Turkish politics since the 1980's. The latter characterization appears to be more plausible considering Gülen has had close relations with various political figures and parties such as Turgut Özal and his party ANAP and later its offshoot the True Path Party (Doğru Yol Partisi, DYP) and its leader Tansu Çiller; in fact, Gülen is noted to be critical of Islamic parties such as the RP, although at one point members of the Nurcu movement had joined Erbakan's MSP though they later split from its ranks due to ideological and political differences (Yavuz, 2003). This stance was probably a contributing factor to the political feud between the Gülen movement and the AKP government. The Gülen movement appears to be the exception rather than the rule, however, since most political Islamists have taken an anti-establishment stance towards the state; Yavuz (2003) notes that, unlike the RP who espoused anti-system rhetoric, the Gülen movement had adopted a strategy of cooperating with the state, even going as far as approving the 1980 military coup.

Probably the most important camp within the political Islam movement is that of Erbakan and the political parties of which he was the leader. An overarching theme of Erbakan's thought was the distancing of Turkey from Western influence and increased emphasis on traditional values. With the establishment of the National Order Party (Milli Nizam Partisi, MNP) under Erbakan's "National Outlook (Milli Görüş)" ideology, political Islam saw its first autonomous and significant manifestation in the political sphere; Erbakan believed that the moral values and spiritual characteristics of the Turkish nation had become vestigial since the West had taken its impact on the Ottoman Empire and the traditional lifestyle within it (Mardin, 2006). It is important to note here that the use of the word "milli" in Erbakan's political views is quite different than its everyday use, translated as "national". In Erbakan's ideas, the word "milli" and "kültür" connote Islam, and "Milli Görüş" refers to the project of political Islam, as the use of religious symbols was banned from politics and hence the need for code words (Eligür, 2010).

Çınar (2005) notes the particular distinction in the understanding of the nation between the laicist Kemalists and the political Islamists. In her conceptualization, the inclusiveness of the idea of the nation between the two camps depends on the national history that they adopt. The dichotomy between the two competing national histories is summed up in the following way:

The unofficial celebration of 29 May emerges as a disruptive interjection in time, an event that forces the public to think of its past in terms of centuries instead of decades. Suddenly the celebration of national time, which had exclusively concentrated on the two decades between 1919 and 1938, warps into the past and locates a national moment in the fifteenth century. The projection of this alternative national history serves to incorporate Ottoman times into the national memory, unsettling the secularist constructions of national history centered on the Kemalist/republican era of the twentieth century.

(Çınar, 2005, p.140)

According to this conceptualization, the political Islamists include in the national memory (and hence in the new idea of the nation) the Ottoman legacy, a legacy that was intentionally excluded from national history as part of the modernizing project of the Kemalist elites. To this end, the political Islamists commemorate the Conquest of Istanbul on 29 May as a milestone in contrast to what the Kemalists deem the beginning of the nation, the Republic Day on 29 October 1923 (Çınar, 2005). What this analysis reveals is that political Islam and its spiritual successor the AKP have created a nationalist discourse based on the traditional and Islamic notion of identity, which competes with the Kemalist national identity based on modernism, laicism and the Turkish nation state.

Similarly, Tepe (2008) explains how the National Outlook (Milli Görüş) ideology survives within the laicist political arena created by the Kemalists but at the same time contests it. What Tepe (2008, p.193) notes, quite interestingly, is the existence of the “sacred” ideas of political Islam “within the blueprint of the Kemalist paradigm”. It is noted, for instance, that an alternative nationalist discourse is created by replacing the term “nation (ulus)” with the term “milli”; as part of the political Islam project of creating an alternative version of nationalism, the latter term has been come to connote both the religious and national community (Tepe, 2008). What Çınar (2005) and Tepe (2005) reveal is that, although at first it seems as though political Islam places less emphasis on nationalism, the reality is in fact that political Islam has created an alternative nationalist discourse which is informed by both a national history which contests the one put forward by the Kemalists (namely the abandoning of the Ottoman legacy and establishing the start of Turkish history with the establishment of the Republic on October 29 1923) and a sacrilization of

alternative ideas, such as “milli”, “national consciousness (şuur)” and more recently “national will (milli irade)” as opposed to “general will (irade)”.

As part of the political Islam project and these ideas presented, a prominent Islamic scholar, Mehmet Zahit Kotku, had supported the idea of establishing a political party that would appeal to religious sentiment, noting that since the deposition of Sultan Abdülhamid II before the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, the leaders of the country had been influenced by the west and were not representative of the nation (Eligür, 2010; Mardin, 2006); this seems to show a clear yearning for the traditional and pious lifestyle in the Ottoman Empire, and the reference to Abdülhamid II, known for being a proponent of Pan-Islamism, more or less signifies the political mission of the party as being based around Islam. The founding declaration of the Party even mentioned the golden age of the Ottoman Empire (Yavuz, 2003).

The MNP was established in 1970 after Erbakan and a number of his allies left the Justice Party (Adalet Partisi, AP) in 1969; the party charter referred to the golden age of the Ottoman period and blamed much of Turkey’s problems on the abandonment of the Ottoman-Islamic heritage and imitating the West in an attempt at modernizing, the latter most probably being an allusion to the Kemalist reforms and state apparatus established by the Kemalists (Yavuz, 2003). The party was banned, however, after the military coup in 1971 on grounds that it threatened the secular principles of the state. The National Salvation Party (Milli Selamet Partisi, MSP) was established by Süleyman Arif Emre in 1972 as its chairman, with Erbakan eventually taking his place in 1973. The party emerged as a successful actor from 1973 to 1980, with the party being in a number of coalition governments and Erbakan even serving as deputy prime minister in 1974 and beyond. Interestingly, a major factor which played a role in the success of the party during this period is the votes of the Kurdish population, which can most probably be attributed to the party’s anti-nationalist sentiment (Yavuz, 2003).

The MSP was banned from politics after the 1980 coup, though the Military’s aim of promoting a Turkish-Islamic synthesis in the political sphere, mainly due to the threat of leftist ideologies, eventually failed to impede the establishment of the Welfare Party, (Refah Partisi, RP), of which Erbakan became the leader after his ban on entering politics was lifted in 1987. The Party combined Islamic rhetoric with



fairly liberal economic policies, although calls for eliminating the interest rate and introducing an Islamic banking system seem peculiar to this party and not necessarily in line with the liberal tradition. According to Eligür (2010) these policy proposals were aimed at capturing the support of voters who were fed up with failing governments, a significant portion of their blame being directed at exclusionary economic policies; the RP saw this as a political opportunity to challenge the democratic-secular state and replace it with an Islamist one.

The RP increased its vote share over the years, and eventually captured a plurality of the votes in the 1995 elections; Erbakan eventually becoming Prime Minister in 1996. Erbakan suggested lifting the ban on the *türban* (headscarf), and proposed readjusting the Turkish legal system so as to accommodate the implementation of Islamic law. The party as a whole challenged secularism, with even one RP member of the National Assembly, Hasan Hüseyin Ceylan, referring to Kemalism and the regime as foreign influences (Eligür, 2010). Following a gathering in which the WP mayor of Sincan implied that Sharia law would be implemented in Turkey and where banners of Hezbollah leaders were displayed, the military pressured the government not to veer out of the laicist fold among fears that the secularist nature of the state was being undermined. Erbakan stood down as Prime Minister and the Party was eventually banned in 1998 for violating the principle of laicism laid down by the Turkish Constitution.

It seems that this was a turning point for some members of the party, who decided to distance themselves from the image of the RP and parties established along the same principles, the Virtue Party (Fazilet Partisi, FP) and later the Felicity Party (Saadet Partisi, SP). Instead, this new Young Turk, “Reformist” group diverged from its predecessors, noting that attempts to change the political system were deemed to fail due to secular reaction, which would also reverse any achievements which had been realized up to that point (Eligür, 2010). The new Party, the Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, AKP), put on the forefront a socially conservative image while also being economically liberal, respecting the principles of democracy and, diverging from its predecessors, an increased willingness to establish dialogue with the West.

Ironically, the leader of the AKP, Erdoğan, was jailed for four months after he recited a poem which seemed to have been inspired by some sayings of Ziya Gökalp, which contained religious references though not originally part of the sayings of Gökalp. Though Abdullah Gül became Prime Minister due to Erdoğan's ban from politics in the aftermath of the 2002 elections, Erdoğan appeared to be the de facto leader of the party and the political decision making process. There has been a difference in opinion on whether the AKP has, or is, undermining the secular principles of the state; although the Party itself had claimed that it was been pursuing its goals within a framework democratic principles, and within the boundaries of secularism (Eligür, 2010), more recent developments, such as its efforts to lift the ban on the *türban* (headscarves) or increase the scope of religious education by introducing an increased number of religious topics as elective subjects in primary schools, have placed suspicion on its real motives. Eligür even claims that, due to the harsh response of secular institutions of the state to previous Islamist parties, some believe the AKP is pursuing a policy of “*takiyye* (a permitted behavior of disguise for the sake of promoting the cause of Islam)”(2010, p.254).

In any case, more recent studies (Esen and Gümüştü, 2016; Özbudun, 2014) have emphasized that there have been significant changes in the nature of the regime, with the AKP shifting towards a more majoritarian understanding of democracy, and even showing characteristics of competitive authoritarianism. Most importantly, the AKP government implemented a number of policies (described in the previous section) which made it difficult for the military to intervene in politics; this decreased the power of tutelary actors, while also preventing them from safeguarding the secular foundations of the state. That the AKP sees the secular camp in society as a threat to their political regime is evident in Erdoğan's characterization of the Gezi Park protests in 2013, which he claims was an attempt by the secular minority to undermine the religious freedoms which had been obtained during the AKP era (Öniş, 2015). To consolidate their rule, the AKP has also changed the composition of both the Constitutional Court and the High Council of Judges and Prosecutors, and have also eliminated tutelary power in the state bureaucracy after the feud with the Gülen Movement, which had considerable influence within the bureaucracy up until 2013.

### 2.3 The History and Function of the Presidency of Religious Affairs

After the abolishment of the Ministries of Şerriye (Religious Affairs) and Evkaf (Pious Foundations), the caliphate and the office of the Şeyh-ül-İslam on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of March 1924, the administration of religious affairs was tied to the Presidency within the central administration (Gözaydın, 2006; Toprak, 1981). At this point, the new religious institution was responsible only for faith and prayer in the religion of Islam and the administration of mosques and prayer-rooms were left to the Presidency-General for Foundations; this was consistent with the idea of the secular elites that religion was to be kept out of government affairs through its exclusion in the Cabinet and given only an administrative role, namely that of administering an Islam compatible with secular policies (Berkes, 1964; Gözaydın, 2006). This also excluded the possibility of Sharia as a legal system (Berkes, 1964). The head of the Presidency of Religious Affairs was (and still is) appointed by the President upon the recommendation of the Prime Minister (Davison, 1998). This was an effective method to ensure that the institution stayed in line with the goals of the lay political elites at the time, though this was possibly undermined in future governments when secular policies were not of prime concern.

The institution saw its privileges grow in the late 1940s with the administration of mosques and prayer rooms being returned to its jurisdiction (Gözaydın, 2006). Kenar (2011) claims that this move was in response to increasing popular dissent caused by the aggressively secular policies pursued by the CHP; indeed, the CHP feared losing electoral ground to the newly emerging DP, who had a more favorable attitude towards religion. The name of the institution was also changed from “Reislik” to “Başkanlık”<sup>3</sup>, a change in line with the modernizing mission of the state; however, with a new bill that was proposed and accepted by the parliament in 1965, the function of the Presidency was extended to include not only the provision of religious services, but also of providing a moral foundation of the populace (Gözaydın, 2006). This appears to be reflective of the ongoing developments of the period, in which the people and other forces of the periphery had become skeptical of

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<sup>3</sup> “Reis”, according to Gözaydın (2006), was the Ottoman equivalent of “president”, whereas “başkan” was a modern Turkish word.

the secularist idea that had been imposed upon the nation since the founding of the republic.

Act 663 was promulgated in parliament on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of June 1965, which officially spelled out the internal structure of the institution and extended its jurisdiction with regards to religious affairs (Kenar, 2011). This act also proposed the establishment of various councils, such as the “High Council of Religious Affairs” and the “Inspection Board”; the High Council of Religious Affairs is an especially significant addition (in the context of this dissertation) to the institution, as it was given the task of providing sermons that are to be read in mosques (Republic of Turkey, 1965). Although various amendments have been made throughout the years, this Act essentially forms the foundation of the current responsibilities of the institution. The principles of the Act are succinctly provided as follows:

1. To state the duties and responsibilities of the Presidency of Religious Affairs as a part of the state administration in accordance with the principals of secularism ...
2. To unify under a single code all the different legislation concerning the Presidency of Religious Affairs...
3. To ameliorate the financial conditions of the Presidency of Religious Affairs and the employees of the institution and to increase the number of employees of the institution...
4. To increase the number of the religious experts who are proficient in pursuing scientific research in the different disciplines of religious matters enabling them to enlighten people by presenting the results of their research....

(Gözaydın, 2009, as cited in Kenar, 2011, p.95)

The institution is currently responsible for the procurement and appointment of religious personnel to mosques throughout the country, the provision of Turkish translations of the Quran, the organization of Quran courses for children, the organization and establishment of mosques and prayer rooms, the arrangement of pilgrimages to Mecca and the writing and distribution of sermons to mosques throughout the country. The task of writing out sermons is now given to the Provincial Sermon Committees, which are finalized after the revision of the provincial Müftü (Saçmal, 2013). Although there is no official practice to ensure

that sermons are read as they are prepared, in principle, the Imams are required to read Friday and Bayram (Eid) sermons in an appropriate and timely manner (Republic of Turkey, 2014). Not only this, but the sermons must also refrain from referring to political issues and individuals, both domestic and foreign (Diyanet İşleri Genel Müdürlüğü, 2015).



CHAPTER 3  
CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

**3.1 Desecularization as a Conceptual Framework for Studying the Change in  
the DĪB**

In order to provide an explanation for the change in the official Islam adopted by the DĪB, it is useful to provide a theoretical framework within which this change operates. The most flexible yet extensive explanation of the change in religious influence in both the social and political sphere is provided by Karpov (2010). Building on Berger's (1999) idea of desecularization, Karpov attempts to explain how a religious resurgence occurs in society and in the political sphere through the actions of (what he calls) "de-secularizing activists". According to Karpov, "desecularization includes (a) a rapprochement between formerly secularized institutions and religious norms; (b) a resurgence of religious beliefs and practices, and (c) a return of religion to the public sphere" (2010, pp.239-240). Ideal types of desecularization project a complete resurgence of religion in all fronts of society, though in reality, Karpov acknowledges that such an occurrence is far from reality; desecularization can occur independently in different spheres, to a more or less extent in one sphere than another, and even only in some institutions or aspects of life. A resurgence of religion in public institutions is not necessarily the product of popular demand, and likewise, increasing religiosity in society may not be reflected through public institutions.

Two aspects of Karpov's framework deserve particular attention within the context of this study. The first is the desecularizing activist who is undertaking the role of changing religion in society or institutions, and consequently, whether the change is

occurring from above or from below. Desecularization from above occurs when religious (or secular) leadership is at the helm of such change; this would also imply that if religious leadership is in a position of power in the political sphere, then one can substitute political leadership for religious leadership. De-secularization from below occurs when de-secularizing activists are organized at the grassroots level. Karpov notes that generally, empirical cases can be placed somewhere in between de-secularization from above or below.

The second aspect in Karpov's framework which is significant is the instance in which de-secularization occurs. A de-secularizing regime is said to emerge when

counter-secularizing activists and actors acquire a certain level of influence on society or on a subset of its institutions, once they occupy, to use a Leninist term, 'commanding heights' [...] By this I mean a particular normative and politico-ideological mode in which desecularization is carried out, expanded, and sustained. It includes: (a) the scope of intended desecularization, ranging from only some institutions and cultural domains to a total religious transformation of society; (b) institutional arrangements (both formal and informal) allocating given amounts of power and authority to religious and secular actors and defining the limits of religious and civil liberties for religious and secular groups in the population; (c) a specific mode of enforcement of these arrangements; and (d) ideologies legitimating the arrangements.

(Karpov, 2010, p.255).

One important idea to note on the above mentioned modes of de-secularization within the context of this study is whether they are all applicable. Since Karpov developed this framework in order to classify types of desecularization occurring in many dimensions of society, not all of these modes are relevant for a case study of one institution (such as the DİB). Indeed, Turkey may be experiencing desecularization (or a change in official religion) in a number of domains, but not all of these will be relevant to the institution in question. What is relevant within the context of this study, however, is the institutional arrangements and the mode of enforcement of these arrangements. These will be discussed further in the next section.

Before this framework is applied to the case of the DİB, a few remarks should be made with regards to how Turkey and the DİB fit into this framework. Throughout

its history, Turkey has experienced secularization and desecularization at various times, which have been undertaken by different desecularizing/secularizing activists. The military's adoption of a Turkish-Islamic synthesis after the 1980 coup, for instance, denotes a desecularization of both the social and political spheres by a secular actor for secular reasons from above. On the other hand, the establishment of political parties with religious ideologies, such as the National Order Party, represents the resurgence of religion in the political sphere undertaken by religious activists at the grassroots level for religious reasons, among others; it should be recalled that it was Mehmet Zahid Kotku, a Nakshibendi scholar, who suggested the establishment of the National Order Party (Mardin, 2006). Thus, it is important to keep in mind that, although these cases may have bearing on the study of the DİB, they occurred under different circumstances for different reasons and were undertaken by activists of a varying nature.

One other important characteristic of the DİB to keep in mind when studying it within this framework is its secularity. It is argued in the literature that the DİB, even if it was an institution established for secular reasons, was not a secular establishment because its objective was to spread the official Islam endorsed by the secular elites (Gözaydın, 2006; Kenar, 2011; Sakallıoğlu, 1996). As such, it may not be appropriate to call the process of change (if such a change has actually occurred) within the DİB desecularization. Nevertheless, this problem can be overlooked if the process of desecularization is substituted with the process of change in official religion. What is meant by this is the change in the presentation of religion through state institutions in accordance with the interpretation of religion by those who hold political power. The same concepts of Karpov's framework apply in this case, though what is measured is not whether religion has become more visible in the public sphere, but whether the religion presented in the public sphere has changed in essence. This is what is aimed to be measured through the Friday sermons published by the DİB.

In order to understand how and why the AKP changed the official Islam represented by the DİB, the next section will analyze the changes undertaken throughout the party's incumbency that enabled this change.



### **3.2.The Consolidation of the AKP Regime and Its Effect on the DİB**

The recent years have seen a growing literature on how the AKP led government has been able to change the nature of state institutions, some describing this as a step towards democratization and some to the consolidation of the AKP's authoritarian regime (Gümüşçü and Keyman, 2014; Öniş, 2015; Özbudun, 2014). The reason these changes (such as the change in the constituent members of the National Security Council or the Constitutional Court) were seen as democratizing is because they decreased the power of tutelary institutions on the legislative and executive branches of the state, making room for more effective and representative governance; Bechev (2014) claims that even though Turkey's negotiations with the EU stalled in 2007, the country was expected to consolidate its democracy and eliminate the remnants of authoritarianism that were brought with the previous constitution of 1982.

On the other hand, more recent developments seemed to have portrayed a different picture of politics in Turkey under the AKP rule. The decreased power of certain institutions, such as the judiciary, has become an obstacle to horizontal accountability, creating a form of governance which is largely unhindered and, with the existence of a strong leader, bearing the characteristics of a delegative democracy (Özbudun, 2014). Similarly, Esen and Gümüşçü (2016) characterize the current state of the regime as competitive authoritarianism due to the uneven playing field created in the electoral arena and frequent violation of civil liberties, such as the incrimination of a large number of journalists and the forcing of certain media outlets into self-censorship. Both characterizations of the current regime in Turkey are based on the observation that the AKP has steadily monopolized power, moving from the periphery of Turkish politics into the centre (Öniş, 2015).

There are different explanations for the turning point of this change in the AKP's attitude in government. Kalaycıoğlu (2011) bases this change on the fact that the Constitutional Referendum of 2010 brought out a cultural rift both among the electorate and the politicians, referring to this as the "kulturkampf" between the Kemalist and secular centre and the traditional and pious periphery (which includes the political Islamists). Öniş (2015) exclaims that this change can also be attributed to the verdict of the party closure case against the AKP in 2008, where the party

narrowly avoided a closure as a result of the deciding vote of Haşim Kılıç, the President of the Constitutional Court; this, according to Öniş, may have left the party in fear that the secular institutions of the state were threatening the existence of the party and its legislative and executive powers.

The most extensive explanation of the AKP's hegemony in government comes from Gümüştü and Keyman (2014), who claim that the transformation of Turkey's governance under AKP rule can be attributed to its electoral hegemony and its transformative capacity. What they mean by electoral hegemony is the party's monopolization of power based on the significant increase in votes it has received throughout the years. This explanation is reinforced with additional factors which the party has been able to utilize under its transformative capacity, such as globalization, modernization, democratization and Europeanization, all of which have been occurring at various times since the inception of the Republic. For instance, the party has responded to the modernization process of the country quite differently from its predecessors by not defining itself as an Islamic party, but as an economically liberal conservative-democratic party; this has enabled it to remain in the system where there remains a threat of being expelled from politics under the tutelage of secular institutions, which see such parties as a threat to modernization and the principle of laicism (Gümüştü and Keyman, 2014).

Perhaps the most relevant aspect of this study is its explanation of the AKP's consolidation of power through its weakening of state institutions such as the military and the judiciary. Gümüştü and Keyman argue that the government has, with its strong electoral mandate, reduced the influence of the military in politics through "legal reforms that cut back the institutional power of the military in decision-making, political delegitimization of military intervention in politics, and criminalization of such interventions"(2014, p.46). The reconstitution of the National Security Council (Milli Güvenlik Kurulu) to include more civilian members and the reform that came with the 2010 referendum which enables military personnel who have committed a crime against the state to be tried in civilian courts are some of the reforms implemented by the government to diminish the power the military has over it.

The judiciary also served the function of keeping the government under check during the AKP rule. According to Gümüüşçü and Keyman (2014), the party closure case which opened in 2008, was the epitome of the clash between the AKP and the secular state. The Constitutional Court's decision not to close the party did not prevent it from taking measures to reduce the influence this institution has over the executive and legislative power of the government; as long as the Court had this capacity, the curtailment of the party's political power, or even worse, the threat of AKP being banned from politics, was always a possibility. By changing the internal organization of both the Constitutional Court and the Higher Council of Judges and Prosecutors through the 2010 referendum, the AKP has considerably decreased the limits the secular state has been able to impose on the government. Previously, only the president appointed members to the Constitutional Court, the Court being composed of eleven members; the referendum enabled the TBMM to appoint two members, with the president now appointing fifteen members to the Court.

The implications of these changes for democracy notwithstanding, they have undoubtedly increased the power the AKP has over state institutions and have aided in consolidating its regime. In fact, the AKP has almost dismantled the secular and Kemalist institutions of the state only to replace them with its own. As Gümüüşçü and Keyman (2014, p.53) put it:

In resemblance to the Kemalist project, the AKP has set course to create its own "acceptable citizen" with a religious-Sunni identity using the instruments of the hegemonic state, which the party had formerly labelled as undemocratic. Once the party established complete control over such institutions, it preserved and utilized them to pursue its own top-down social transformation. Accordingly, the AKP government closely monitored the higher education institutions through the YOK, centrally managed Sunni-Islam through significantly empowered Directorate of Religious Affairs (Diyanet), reshaped and used the education system to cater to its ideological agenda of raising pious generations, and securitized social opposition and political differences by resorting to heavy police violence whenever people challenged the AKP policies and decisions by diverting from the behavioural norms of "acceptable citizens".

Further elaboration on how these institutions have changed after the AKP monopolized its power is not presented. However, considering that the AKP,

although it does not explicitly characterize itself as such, comes from the strand of political Islam, it is inevitable that they will seek to alter practices and the official ideology within a state institution such as the DİB, an institution established by the Kemalist elite in order to disseminate a version of Islam compatible with the newly formed laicist Republic and the idea of a nation state. Aside from the religious motive the new AKP elites may have had to change the official Islam adopted by the DİB, the non-religious motive seems to be the disestablishment of the secular pillars of the state; as part and parcel of the AKP elites' aim of eliminating the threat of dissidence posed by institutions established or occupied by the Kemalists, the outlook of the DİB has changed to represent less of the Kemalist ideology and more of the AKP's idea of political Islam.

Such changes in the organization and practices of the DİB have been observed by various studies in the literature. Cornell and Kaya (2015) note, for instance, that the DİB has become increasingly politicized since 2010 after Erdoğan attempted to bring it into the political arena; Ali Bardakoğlu, the then president of the DİB, refused to comment on the headscarf issue, claiming that this would be in violation of the principle of laicism, and it was not long after this that he left his position which was later filled by vice president of the DİB, Mehmet Görmez. Additionally, it has been argued that the end of the ban on headscarves in universities in 2011 and the removal of Kemalist principles as the guiding framework of the education system in 2012 have been turning points for the AKP's objective of increasing the visibility of Islam in the public sphere, and that the desired instrument to reach this objective has been the DİB (Yenerocak, 2015). Additionally, the appearance of Mehmet Görmez in many different events and alongside political figures (especially President Erdoğan) points towards the political use of the DİB to justify the political and social agenda of the AKP. Görmez's statements about the harms of Islamic sects fighting each other (which echoed Erdoğan's statements on this issue) seem to point towards a use of the DİB as a legitimizing tool (*TRT*, 2015). In this sense, the DİB can almost be said to function within an informative, teaching and legitimizing capacity during the AKP period.

An especially valuable study in the context of the DİB and the sermons it produces is that prepared by Saçmalı (2013); in his work, he argues that the state, the government and society all play a major role in the DİB's production and

dissemination of religious texts and publications. Most importantly, he notes that the AKP is also an influential agent in this regard, and argues that the bureaucracy within the DİB (including the Sermon Preparation Committees) is mostly passive and conforms to the demands of these agents. As such, it is highly likely that the DİB has come under the influence of the AKP government, preparing sermons which are likely to reflect the AKP's idea of Islam. Although Saçmalı (2013) does not undertake a systematic analysis of sermons produced and disseminated after 2010, he does observe that there has been a change in the official Islam adopted by the government during the AKP era. A considerable change in official Islam is observed after the general elections in 2011, though he does acknowledge that a substantial amount of this change could also be attributed to the change in presidency of the DİB which took place in 2010. An important shift he observes is a decreasing emphasis on nationalism and an inclusion of Muslim minorities in the new understanding of the Islamic community.

Although a number of different turning points are given in the literature for the consolidation of the AKP regime and its subsequent influence on state institutions such as the DİB, it is more useful to understand this transformation as an ongoing process, possibly acquiring more acceleration with developments such as the 2010 Constitutional Referendum and subsequent election of Abdullah Gül as President, the 2008 Party Closure case and the 2011 General Elections. Nevertheless, within the context of the DİB, it makes sense to separate the two periods in 2010, coinciding with both the Constitutional Referendum and the change in presidency of the DİB.

In short, the case of the AKP can be placed into the conceptual framework in the following manner: The desecularizing activist (or as amended in the previous section, the activist which would undertake change in official religion endorsed by the state) would be those with political power within the AKP. The point at which the desecularizing regime (or the regime in which there is change in official religion) emerges is when the AKP has reached, in Karpov (2010)'s terms, commanding heights; this is reached (with the influence of a number of factors mentioned in this section) after the 2010 Constitutional Referendum, a point at which the AKP has greatly diminished the political power of the secular establishments of the state and eliminated (to a large extent) the prospects of party closure. It uses the DİB as a resource to disseminate its interpretation of religion through the appointment of a

religious scholar to the presidency of the institution. Besides its religious motive, a secular reason to pursue such a change may lie in the fact that the party wishes to eliminate (or subdue) all secular establishments which may pose a threat to its ideology and existence.



## CHAPTER 4

### ANALYSIS OF SERMONS PUBLISHED BY THE DİB

To assess whether there has been a change in the official Islam endorsed by the state and disseminated through state institutions in Turkey, sermons prepared by the DİB in two periods will be analyzed. The two periods are determined in accordance with the appointment of a new president for the PRA, Mehmet Görmez, in place of the previous president Ali Bardakoğlu; this change in the presidency of the DİB also coincides with the Turkish Constitutional Referendum in 2010. It is expected that after this turning point, the sermons will show less emphasis on nationalist and Kemalist ideologies compared to the previous period.

#### 4.1 Data and Method

The sermons have been taken from the website of the Istanbul Müfti's Office (İstanbul İl Müftülüğü)<sup>4</sup>. The sermons date between 06.06.2003 (the appointment of Ali Bardakoğlu as president of the PRA) to 17.06.2016, the most recent date available before the completion of this study. The first period contains 385 sermons, and the second period contains 311 sermons. One shortcoming of the study is that the sermons which have been analyzed are those which are read in mosques in Istanbul, prepared by the Provincial Sermon Commission (İl Hutbe Komisyonu). Although there is some overlap between different provinces with regards to the content of the sermons, there is no evidence to show that the sermons prepared by the Istanbul Provincial Sermon Commission are read in mosques in other cities<sup>5</sup>, so it may not

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<sup>4</sup> T.C. İstanbul Müftülüğü, 2016. Available at: <http://www.istanbulmuftulugu.gov.tr/index.php/hutbe-arsivi/1559-hutbe-arsivi.html>

<sup>5</sup> For comparison, see sermons prepared by the Ankara Müfti's Office since 2008: <http://www.ankaramuftulugu.gov.tr/yeni/icerik-110.html>

represent the position of the DİB on the whole. Nevertheless, considering that Istanbul has the largest population in Turkey, it is reasonable to assume that a large congregation is reached through these sermons<sup>6</sup>. A study undertaken by the DİB in 2014 with a sample size of 37.624 individuals revealed that just over half of the males surveyed in Istanbul reported attending to Friday prayers (DİB, 2014). If this sample is representative, and assuming a uniform distribution of sexes, this amounts to around 3 and a half million individuals; this is more than the male population of the next largest province, Ankara (TÜİK, 2016a; 2016b). The disadvantages of analyzing sermons in only one province notwithstanding, the fact that Istanbul has the largest Friday prayer attending population makes it a special case and one can only assume that special care is given when preparing sermons here.

A preliminary analysis of words and word groups was undertaken using qualitative data analysis software<sup>7</sup>. The analysis first looks at general trends within each subset of sermons to see which words occur more frequently in each of them. These words were then analyzed in the instance they were used to provide a contextual basis and achieve a more accurate sense in which the word is used. Although a content analysis approach would provide more robust results, this approach is avoided for a number of reasons. The first reason relies on the fact that a pure content analysis approach only provides word frequencies, and this alone is not enough to argue that sermons emphasize some subjects over others. A simple word count may decontextualize a word and lead to erroneous conclusions (Billig, 1988 as cited in Wilson, 1993). For instance, the fact that the word “science” is used more in one period than in the other may not highlight the fact that this word was used in that period with negative connotations.

One other reason that a content analysis approach would prove to be difficult is based on the fact that no word seems to be appropriated by either camp that has been propounded upon in the previous chapters. For instance, one approach would be to find a seminal text representing either camp in order to measure how much congruence there was with the sermons in each period. However, a problem that may

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<sup>6</sup> Istanbul has the largest number of mosques in Turkey, with 3,223 mosques being located in the province in 2014 (*Sabah*, 2014).

<sup>7</sup> Word frequencies were produced using ATLAS. ti. The context within which each word occurs is retrieved is obtained using QDA Miner.



arise in such an approach is that some words are used by both camps with different meanings; the fact that one version of Islam uses this word does not necessarily distinguish it from the other. One such word, “milli”<sup>8</sup>, is used by both political Islamists and Kemalists; the political Islamists have tended to use this word similar to its meaning in the Ottoman Empire, with religious connotations (Eligür, 2010). As such, the word may be used in seminal texts in both versions of Islam, and this distinction will not be evident without looking at the context within which the word is used. Thus, content analysis will only be used to reveal general trends on an ad hoc basis, while the study will mostly rely on discourse analysis.

The sermons that were analyzed in depth within the next section were selected by first assessing whether they contained words relating to the themes that were revealed in the literature review in chapter 2 (see appendix A for the themes that are analyzed in the next section). Among the sermons selected, passages which contained words relating to these themes were analyzed in depth. Such a sampling method may introduce attrition bias to the thesis. However, this is necessary in order to separate sermons which are relevant from those that don’t contain themes which are relevant to the study; a significant number of sermons deal with purely Islamic issues (such as Tawhid or Cleanliness in Islam) which do not contain any of the words associated with the themes studied. Another bias which may be introduced into the study is selection bias. Since there weren’t a large number of sermons for each theme (or the sermons which contained the words associated with these themes), randomly selecting the sermons was an obstacle to this study. Nevertheless, to remedy this bias to some extent and to show that the way in which these themes were presented in each period is consistent throughout, special care was taken both to select sermons that were distant to each other temporally within each period, and to not include sermons within the same year for each theme.

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<sup>8</sup>The meaning of “milli” is given as “national”, or “pertaining to the nation” by the Turkish Language Association (Türk Dil Kurumu, TDK). Obtained from:  
[http://tdk.gov.tr/index.php?option=com\\_bts&arama=kelime&guid=TDK.GTS.577d0aaa0f2868.96935422](http://tdk.gov.tr/index.php?option=com_bts&arama=kelime&guid=TDK.GTS.577d0aaa0f2868.96935422)

## 4.2 Analysis of Sermons Published between June 2003-October 2010 and November 2010-June 2016

A basic measure of the frequencies of words that connote national values, such as “milli, millet, vatan, memleket, Türk, Türkiye” reveals that these words were used much more frequently in the first period than in the second (see appendix B). The frequency of these words in the first period (June 2003-October 2010) is 0,0043 of the total number of words contained within the sermons, while the frequency of these words in the second period (November 2010-June 2016) is 0,0020, less than half of the first period. This finding is in line with the argument that the first period places more emphasis on national values, possibly as a result of the Turkish-Islamic Synthesis concept this period reflects. Of course, this analysis on its own may not reveal much, and it is more useful to look at some of the instances within which these words are used.

It is important here to note the context within which the words “nation (millet)”, “national (milli)” and “vatan (motherland)” are used. As stated in the previous section, the Turkish Language association defines “millet” as “people who generally live within the same territory and share a common linguistic, historical, spiritual and traditional heritage”, “milli” as “national” or “pertaining to the nation”, and “vatan” as “the territory within which people live and establish a common culture”.<sup>9</sup> The sermons in both periods rarely cross the boundaries of these definitions, although it is important to note in some instances the inclusiveness of the definition of the “nation (millet)” in some sermons in the second period. In the first period, the word “nation” is generally qualified as being Turkish and takes as its inception the establishment of the Republic. In the second period, the inclusiveness of the definition of the nation seems to extend beyond that of the Turkish Republic to include the Ottoman heritage within the meaning of the word. One sermon (dated 2.12.2011 and titled “Understanding Karbala”<sup>10</sup>) contains the following passage:

Ashura is the symbol of sharing, solidarity and the community. The blessings that come together contribute to the mutual feelings that

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<sup>9</sup> Turkish Language Association (Türk Dil Kurumu, TDK). Available at: <http://www.tdk.gov.tr/>

<sup>10</sup> “Kerbela’yı Anlamak (2.12.2011)”.

arise during this month, and our nation, as part of living together for centuries, shares their joy and sorrow, and their troubles and affection during this month.

Claiming that the history of the nation extends back centuries (as opposed to decades) creates a discourse similar to that put forward by the political Islamists in line with the project of creating an alternative national history, as argued by Çınar (2005). This idea of the nation, by creating a national history that stems back further to include the Ottoman Empire as a spiritual ancestor, creates a more inclusive concept of nationality that extends to include the ummah rather just the “Turkish” nation.

One sermon (dated 29.08.2003 and titled “Motherland, Nation, State ... Forever”)<sup>11</sup> contains the following passage (see appendix C for original excerpts):

81 years ago, our nation, under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal ATATÜRK [sic], protected our state, which we value more than our lives, and our flag, decorated with the crescent and star, from the enemies who jeopardized the independence of our state and the freedom of our nation, and re-established our freedom and independence.

It is evident from this passage that symbols of the Republic, such as the flag and the name of Atatürk, have been used in a manner that deems them sacred; noteworthy is the passing of Atatürk’s name in capital letters, possibly as a means for it to be emphasized or as a sign of respect. Words with positive connotations, such as “freedom” and “independence” are associated with the “nation” and “state”. Although this passage does not contain any reference to religion, the same sermon exclaims that the love of the nation is a religious duty. It is important to note that this sermon comes just one day before Victory Day (Zafer Bayramı), a day which commemorates the victory of a decisive battle in the War of Liberation (Kurtuluş Savaşı) and in the same week as the Battle of Manzikert (1071 A.D.), a battle which consolidated the Seljuqi presence in Anatolia.

In contrast, the sermons dealing with this issue in the second subset only appear in the year 2013 (dated 30.08.2013), with the same sermon appearing again only in 2014 (dated 29.08.2014); these sermons seem to have the exact same wording and

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<sup>11</sup> “Vatan, Millet, Devlet... İlelebet (29.08.2003)”.

title, “Victory comes from God”. The sermon commemorates both of these events in the first paragraph, although the paragraph ends in the words “Our duty in this month of victories is not to be proud of them, but to understand how these victories were achieved and to understand the underlying faith and spirit associated with this achievement”. The sermon then trails off into a slightly different topic which talks about “the conquering of hearts”. Noteworthy is the fact that neither Atatürk nor the nation (in the vernacular “our nation”) appear within this sermon. The word nation is only mentioned in passing as “[Our ancestors] have at times forsaken their life and loved ones in the name of religion, faith, the nation, the state and those things considered sacred”.

Words containing the root “Turk (Türk)” seem to be referred to in a manner much more relevant to the nation in the first period, although these seem to be few and far between. One sermon (dated 24.10.2003 and titled “Republic Day”<sup>12</sup>) dealing with Republic Day contains the following passage:

[This noble nation] has continued to preserve its national sovereignty in Anatolia throughout the centuries, established the Republic of Turkey and announced this to the entire world on 29<sup>th</sup> of October 1923.

Similarly, another sermon (dated 28.08.2009 and titled “Those who became Legends on 30<sup>th</sup> of August”<sup>13</sup>) exclaims “The Muslim Turkish Nation’s [sic] love of the motherland is a reflection of its immense faith”. Yet another sermon (dated 19.03.2004 and titled “The Victory of Çanakkale”<sup>14</sup>) quotes Atatürk, who is reported to have said “The strength of the faith of Turkish soldiers [who were reading the Qur’an or reciting the Shahada during the Battle of Çanakkale] deserves amazement”. The qualification of the “Turkish nation” as “Muslim” and the attribution of the faith of the “Turkish soldiers” to holy rituals points almost towards a symbiosis of the two ideas; it seems that Turkishness cannot exist without Islam, and the Islamic faith is made all the more valuable when it is practiced by the Turkish nation, ideas akin to the Turkish-Islamic synthesis explained in previous sections.

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<sup>12</sup> “Cumhuriyet Bayramı (24.10.2003)”.

<sup>13</sup> “30 Ağustos’ta Destanlaşanlar (28.08.2009)”.

<sup>14</sup> “Çanakkale Zaferi (19.03.2004)”.

An interesting idea is presented in a sermon (dated 26.06.2009 and titled “Helping Each Other”<sup>15</sup>) which explains the religious origins of the idea of a nation-state in the following manner:

Our Holy Book proclaims that “all people are siblings who come from the same ancestors, their mother and father Adam and Eve, and are separated into tribes or nations so they can acquaint with each other and live in peace”. Hence the word “tanışlık” is used to denote peace in the language of Turkic peoples outside of Turkey.

Two ideas are emphasized in this passage. One is the shared cultural heritage of Turkey with other Turkic people, their “ethnic brothers”, so to speak. The second idea is the basis of the nation-state in religious text; it seems as if the idea of a nation-state is legitimized through passages presented in the Qur’an. This seems to be consistent with the Kemalist project of bolstering the national identity with the legitimacy of Islam, though this Islam being compatible with the idea of a nation state (Kenar, 2011; Sakallıođlu, 1996; Waxman, 2000).

Conversely, it should be recalled that political Islamists, including Erdoğan and the AKP, consider “nationalism as a relic of the pre-Islamic society and a sin (qavmiyyet)” (Kalaycıođlu, 2005, p.198). The passage “In the jahiliyya period, people would take pride in their ethnic origin or the clan and tribe they belonged to ... People would be despised due to their ethnicity or color and would be disdained and alienated from society” which occurs in one sermon (dated 05.06.2015 and titled “Islam Rejects All Forms of Racism”<sup>16</sup>) seems to represent this idea. This is not to say the previous period endorsed racism. However, the passages analyzed do seem to imply that being Turkish is a privilege, and that even the Qur’an supports the idea of forming nations and tribes. In any case, although “Turkishness” and emphasis on the “Turkish nation” seem to distinguish to some extent both periods, the distinction should not be overemphasized, since the issue is not covered extensively and consistently in the first period. Nevertheless, comparison of sermons falling on national holidays in both periods seems to show that the emphasis “Turkishness” is relatively more prevalent in the first period; none of the words containing the root “Turk” are used in the context of the nation or to refer to nationality in the second

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<sup>15</sup>“Yardımlaşma (26.06.2009)”.

<sup>16</sup>“İslam, Irkçılığın Her Türüsünü Reddeder (05.06.2015)”.

period, occurring only in subscripts, names of individuals who are cited or in official names of organizations, such as the Turkish Diyanet Foundation (Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı).

Similarly, words with the root “race (ırk)” and “ethnicity (etnik)” appear more than two times as frequently in the second period than in the first. Again, this does not imply that either of the periods contain racist rhetoric, but that the second period may be influenced by the political or social atmosphere at the time. A within context analysis of the words reveals this; one sermon (dated 05.08.2011 and titled “Rights of Neighbours”<sup>17</sup>) commands that “In the spirit of the hadith ‘He who sleeps full when his neighbour is hungry cannot be one of us’, we should find those in need of material and spiritual help and reach out to them, irrespective of their religion, language or race”. Similarly, one other sermon (dated 26.06.2015 and titled “Unity that Comes from Tawhid”<sup>18</sup>) proclaims “We should emphasize our Islamic brotherhood in the manner our Prophet (s.a.s) established between the Ansar and the Muhajir, not our sectarian, spiritual, racial, regional and geographic differences”. Almost all sermons within this period (which contain the words “race” and “ethnic”) contain similar phrasing and seem to be based on the maxim that racial and ethnic discrimination is prohibited in Islam.

One sermon (dated 15.03.2013 and titled “Martyrdom and Çanakkale”) seems to stand out in this respect, containing the passage “The desire for martyrdom rose above differences in color, race and language and brought together courageous men from all over the country on the same front”. This passage implies that the victory achieved in the Battle of Çanakkale was not necessarily a product of nationality or of a shared ethnic background, but due to a shared faith and a belief in the sanctity of martyrdom; in a sense, this likely echoes the Neo-Ottomanism endorsed by the AKP, a building of identity along the lines of Islam rather than a shared nationality (Taşpınar, 2008). Such mention of the pre-eminence of religion over racial and ethnic differences is not present in sermons commemorating national holidays or historic battles in the first period. Similar to the first period, sermons that take up the issue of race and ethnicity do exclaim that segregation along these lines is forbidden

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<sup>17</sup> “Komşu Hakları (05.08.2011)”.

<sup>18</sup>“Tevhid ile Gelen Birlik (26.06.2015)”.

in Islam, and that fundamental rights are due to individuals regardless of their ethnicity; however, three of these sermons talk about how national and ethnic diversity are signs of the greatness of God, and that ethnic, religious and geographic differences are opportunities to bond with each other. In a sense, these sermons seem to consider these differences unavoidable, and imply that they should be embraced in line with Islamic principles.

The prominence of this issue in the second period can be tied to the AKP's policy of building bridges with the Kurdish secessionist movement in Turkey, and possibly also to consolidate its vote among the Kurdish population, although this is difficult to establish firmly. The word "Kurd (Kürt)" only occurs once in the second period, in a sermon (dated 05.02.2016 and titled "Now is the Time to Heal Wounds"<sup>19</sup>) that takes up implicitly the civil war in Syria and the bombings which had occurred in Turkey prior to that date. The passage "While we are engulfed in a ring of fire, thousands of our Turkmen, Arab and Kurdish brothers are seeking refuge in our country" is the first and last instance in which Kurds are referred to. Although the fact that it occurs once doesn't really reveal much, it may imply that political environment within this period is not in fear of referring to Kurds as a separate entity. Conversely, this word does not appear at all in the first period.

The issue of "Turkishness" and "ethnicity" seems to fit well into the theoretical framework. It is known that AKP politicians, especially Erdoğan, refrain from emphasizing Turkish nationalism. In one speech, Erdoğan is noted to have said in 2004 in his visit to a foundation which celebrates Turkish nationality in Romania "Ideologies have run their course in the world. Neither ethnic nor religious ideologies remain forever" (Sarioğlu, 2005). Similarly, in 2013, Erdoğan had said that he detests all kinds of nationalism, including Kurdish, Turkish and Arab nationalism (NTV, 2013). However, this position is reflected in the sermons only after 2010, at which point the AKP can be considered to have reached "commanding heights" and appointed Mehmet Görmez to the presidency of the DİB. Görmez also echoes this position of the AKP, and has said that nation-statism and ethnic nationalism are the biggest threats posed to Islam (İstanbul İl Müftülüğü, 2016).

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<sup>19</sup>"Şimdi Yaraları Sarma Zamanı (05.02.2016)".

Contrary to the expectations of this analysis, the word “terror (terör)” occurs more frequently in the second period than in the first. This expectation is based on the fact that the AKP initiated a “Resolution Process (Çözüm Süreci)” which was promulgated as a law in 2014 (Republic of Turkey, 2014b), and that this would decrease the usage of the word terror within the context of the Kurdish secessionist movement so as to change the outlook on this issue towards a more positive one. However, a closer analysis of where the word occurs in the text of the sermon(s) is more revealing. Within the second period, the word seems to be used in a general sense, referring mainly to global terror and that acts of terrorism are an attempt to discredit Islam in the eyes of the world. The excerpt in one sermon (dated 19.04.2013 and titled “Preserving Our Humanity”<sup>20</sup>) “We, as inhabitants of the Earth, are going through a difficult time amidst global issues such as discrimination, racism, colonialism, violence, terrorism, war, abuse and famine” is evidence for the former. The excerpt in another sermon (dated 20.11.2015 and titled “Islam: The Religion in the Crosshairs of Global Terrorism”<sup>21</sup>) “Some individuals who have no conscience and compassion have created a negative perception and image of Islam, by associating it with terrorism and violence” is evidence for the latter.

There is no explicit reference in the second period to terrorist acts committed by the Kurdish secessionist movement and to the idea that terror is a threat to national unity. Although the first period, similar to the second, takes up terror as a general phenomenon, two sermons seem to stand out in this respect. One sermon (dated 25.11.2003 and titled “Eid: Days of Peace and Brotherhood”<sup>22</sup>) contains the following passage:

Let us pray for the happiness of our family, for the peace of our nation, for the continuity of our national unity and for the future of our state. Let us show that we are unified as a nation and take a stance against terrorism.

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<sup>20</sup>“İnsan Kalabilmek (19.04.2013)”.

<sup>21</sup> “Küresel Terörün Hedef Aldığı Din:İslam (20.11.2015)”.

<sup>22</sup> “Huzur ve Kardeşlik Günleri Bayramlar (25.11.2003)”



This passage emphasizes the threat that terrorism poses to the nation rather than to Islam or to the international community. Similarly, another sermon (dated 26.10.2007 and titled “Republic Day”<sup>23</sup>) contains the following passage:

As expressed in a statement made at the Government Summit [sic] following the atrocious act of terrorism which took place in the province of Hakkari, “It is clear that the terrorist organization aims to disturb our national unity through these treacherous acts”.

This passage clearly refers to the PKK (Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê), a Marxist-Leninist organization that aims to establish increased political and cultural autonomy for Kurds in Turkey, and a particular event. Thus, it can be said that terrorism is referred to in a more local context in the first period, as a threat to the unity of the nation, whereas the second period approaches terrorism in a more general and global sense, and refers to terrorism in the context of Islam; this could be due to the “Peace Process” that gained momentum in this period, and the AKP’s policy of creating a more inclusive Islam that is more independent from the concept of the nation and nationality.

The Kurdish issue also seems to fit within the theoretical framework quite well. Although the AKP had voiced its concern for solving the Kurdish problem throughout its time in government, solid steps to undertake this only came after the military had lost power vis-à-vis the civilian government (Paker, 2012). Indeed, the AKP had voiced (up until recently) its determination to solve the Kurdish issue; Erdoğan had stated in 2005 in Diyarbakır that any issue, including the Kurdish issue, should be solved through democratic means (Sarıoğlu, 2005). However, this only saw its reflection in the official Islam of the DİB and in the sermons after 2010, both after the Sledgehammer and Ergenekon movements and the 2010 Constitutional Referendum, after the which the civilian government and hence the AKP had increased its power against the military and had appointed its own handpicked candidate to the presidency of the DİB. Görmez also reflected this position of the AKP when he stated that sermons could be orated in Kurdish in 2012 (Başaran, 2012). However, it is important to note that the increased emphasis on global terror in the second period could also be caused by the surge in terrorist attacks across the globe, especially those committed by the DAESH or the Islamic State; this could

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<sup>23</sup>“Cumhuriyet Bayramı (26.10.2007)”.

possibly explain why the sermons in the second period blame terrorism for giving Islam a bad reputation.

Considering the yearning political Islam has had for the traditional and pious way of life in the Ottoman Empire, it would be expected that the word “Ottoman (Osmanlı)” would occur more in the second period. Contrary to this expectation, the word occurs nearly eight times more frequently in the first period than in the second. Most of these seem to be used when referring to historical events or the traditional primary school education system in the Ottoman Empire (“sıbyan mektebi); such a use can be seen in the following passage (in a sermon dated 19.03.2005 and titled “Çanakkale Cannot be Conquered”<sup>24</sup>):

By attempting to pass the Çanakkale strait in order to conquer Istanbul and eventually tear apart our country and enslave our nation, the mindset which sought to wipe Islam off the face of the earth declared war on the Ottoman Empire in November 1914.

Similarly, one other sermon (dated 16.03.2007 and titled “Martyrdom in Islam and the Çanakkale Victory”<sup>25</sup>) talks about how the nations with the strongest armies in the world attempted to pass the Çanakkale straight and wipe the “Muslim Turks” off the pages of history by annihilating the Ottoman Empire, a state they called the “Sick Man”. It is interesting that the Ottoman Empire is emphasized as a “Muslim Turk” nation within this period; a similar usage is employed in a sermon (dated 28.05.2004 and titled “The Conquest of Istanbul”<sup>26</sup>) dealing with the Conquest of Istanbul; here, it is described how II. Mehmed (Fatih Sultan Mehmet) had the honor of fulfilling the prophecy of conquering Istanbul (foreseen by the prophet Muhammed), referring to him as a “Turkish emperor (Türk hükümdarı)”. Conversely, in the second period, one sermon (dated 24.05.2013 and again titled “The Conquest of Istanbul”<sup>27</sup>) refers to Mehmed II as an “Ottoman ruler (Osmanlı hükümdarı)”. With little comparative data in the second period, however, this analysis may not reveal a useful distinction. As a result, whether this fits in with the desecularization theory (or change in official Islam) is not clear, since, contrary to expectations, the first period contains more

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<sup>24</sup> This appears to be the most accurate translation for “Çannakale Geçilmez (19.03.2005)”.

<sup>25</sup> “İslam’da Şehitlik ve Çanakkale Zaferi (16.03.2007)”.

<sup>26</sup> “İstanbul’un Fethi (28.05.2004)”.

<sup>27</sup> “İstanbul’un Fethi (24.05.2013)”.

references to the Ottomans than the second. It is noted that, in an event commemorating the Conquest of Istanbul in May 2016, there was not mention of II.Mehmed, who was the commander of the Ottomans at the time the city was conquered (Bahçetepe, 2016).

The most interesting distinction between the two periods is evident in the usage of the words “Mustafa Kemal” and “Atatürk”. Reference to Atatürk is made consistently throughout the period, though it is important to note here that the use of his name is exclusively clustered around sermons commemorating national holidays or historic battles. As expected, the name is used in a glorifying manner; one sermon (dated 24.10.2008 and titled “Republic Day”<sup>28</sup>) emphasizes how Atatürk laid the foundation for the Republican regime through the following passage:

Our nation rallied around Mustafa Kemal, the glorious leader and commander of this great victory, to establish a regime which placed the public’s and hence the nation’s will at the center of the system. This regime was called the Republic.

Here, two observations can be made; one is that Atatürk is clearly seen as the savior and leader of the nation. The second is the legitimacy granted to the regime Atatürk established. This is the general trend within this period; the sermons that contain these names generally glorify the battles that were won in the Turkish War of Independence, describe how valiantly the soldiers fought on the battlefield and how they never lost faith and commemorate those who became martyrs in these battles, including Atatürk’s comrades (“silah arkadaşları”).

The second period contains the word “Atatürk” only once in one sermon (dated 10.12.2010 and titled “Muharram Month and the Day of Ashura”<sup>29</sup>) and this is only in a subscript, referring to a mosque named after him (“Atatürk Havalimanı Camii İmam Hatibi). The fact that his name is not used in sermons is not surprising. However, what is revealing is the date that this cut-off occurs. Up until the last days of the first period (or up until Bardakoğlu’s term comes to an end), Atatürk’s name is still used in sermons; the last use of the name occurs in a sermon dated 29.10.2010

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<sup>28</sup> “Cumhuriyet Bayramı (24.10.2008)”

<sup>29</sup> “Muharrem Ayı ve Aşure Günü (10.12.2010)”.

and titled again “Republic Day”<sup>30</sup>, while Bardakoğlu left office on 11.11.2010 (Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı, 2016b).

This seems to be a clearly distinguishing element between the two periods, with the first period internalizing Kemalism and the second one avoiding its use as soon as a change in presidency occurs. Moreover, starting from 2012, Republic Day is no longer commemorated in the sermons; this may also be due to the Republican regime being a product of the Kemalist elite, and the scepticism that political Islam has of the legitimacy of this regime. This theme seems to fit well within the theoretical framework; after the AKP has consolidated its power in 2010 and gained leverage over the Constitutional Court and the military, it has been much more open about its views on Atatürk and laicism. This is also evident through the distinction between views expressed on Atatürk in the AKP leadership in the two periods. Previously, in an event commemorating Atatürk’s death in 2008, Erdoğan spoke highly of him, stating that the nation was saved under his leadership and that the secular Turkish Republic’s principles were not up for discussion (*Radikal*, 2008). However, in 2014, Erdoğan claimed Atatürk’s name had been used to delegitimize the will of the nation, that the Republic was not a new entity and stemmed from Turkey’s history and that “template” idealizations of Atatürk should be abandoned (*Sabah*, 2014). This desecularization (or change in official Islam) in the context of Atatürk and Kemalism is analogous to the change in the content of sermons as presented above, especially after the change of presidency of the DİB and 2010.

Finally, one other concept which shows a distinction between two periods is “science (bilim)”. It is important to note here the difference between “ilim” and “bilim”. While many use these two words interchangeably, theology seems to distinguish between the two concepts; while “bilim” (or science) is the achievement of systematic knowledge of the universe or reality through experimental methodology, “ilim” is conducting science by referring to God or religion (Yıldırım, 2016). In a sense, “ilim” is used to refer to knowledge in general. While both periods refer to “ilim” in a similar manner, reference to science is made quite differently in the two periods. The word “bilim” is used more than two times as frequently in the first period than in the second. The first period generally emphasizes the positive aspects

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<sup>30</sup>“Cumhuriyet Bayramı (29.10.2010)”.

of science. A passage occurring in one sermon (dated 23.03.2007 and titled “The Relation between Religion and Science”<sup>31</sup>) is evidence for this:

Science, on the other hand, is the activity of discovering and explaining how natural phenomena and events occur. Humankind, who bares the responsibility of his actions, cannot be indifferent to what is going on around him, and thus it is unthinkable that he should have a negative attitude towards science.

On the other hand, there is one sermon (dated 26.03.2010 and titled “The Problems of our Age”<sup>32</sup>) which does point out how in society people’s lifestyles, relationships with their relatives, neighbors and values have changed because of the science and technology, and that technology and the modern lifestyle is not (on its own) enough for people to lead happy lives. This seems to be the exception rather than the rule, however, for this period. Conversely, in the second period, where the word “bilim” is used it generally has negative connotations. One sermon (dated 10.06.2011 and titled “Religion and Technology”<sup>33</sup>) contains the following passage:

[The Muslim world] is paying the high price of being behind in scientific and technological development. But where is modern technology taking mankind? In the words of one well known Western thinker, “Like everything, modern people have now become the object and material of technology...”

Similarly, another sermon (dated 19.11.2010 and titled “The Importance of Knowledge and Scholarship”<sup>34</sup>) states that “...In the science and technology age we live in, it is becoming clearer every day that our moral and spiritual values are eroding”. In general, though there is no outright hostility towards science, the outlook on science as “bilim” seems to be skeptical within this period; this could be down to the positivist tint that Kemalism gave to its interpretation of Islam, and the place of science in the “image of the good society” which this camp endorsed (Kalaycıoğlu, 2005; Kenar, 2011; Sakallıoğlu, 1996). There is one sermon in the second period (dated 07.09.2012 and titled “As Schools are Opening”<sup>35</sup>) which

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<sup>31</sup>“Din-Bilim İlişkisi (23.03.2007)”.

<sup>32</sup>“Çağımızın Problemleri (26.03.2010)”.

<sup>33</sup>“Din ve Teknoloji (10.06.2011)”.

<sup>34</sup>“İlim ve Âlimin Önemi (19.11.2010)”.

<sup>35</sup>“Okullar Açılırken (07.09.2012)”.

encourages parents to educate their children in a manner which enables them to distinguish “science from superstition (bilimi hurafeden ayırma)”, giving science a complementary role in learning religion in an appropriate manner (devoid of superstitious beliefs). Again, however, this seems to be the exception rather than the rule.

The concept of science and positivism are reflective of the AKP’s desecularization and attempt to change official Islam within the theoretical framework. In 2013 at an event organized by the DİB, Erdoğan spoke of how science (“bilim”) and knowledge (“ilim”) were different, and that if scientific knowledge did not take the individual to a higher level or did not appeal to the heart, then this was not true knowledge (“ilim”) (*Sabah*, 2013). Similarly, the president of the DİB Görmez (2012) notes how positivism wrongly predicted the downfall of religion, signifying his view that science and positivism do not have the explanatory power that some believed they had. This position counter to the Kemalist idea of positivism, and is present in sermons both after the appointment of Görmez to the presidency of the DİB and cutoff point in 2010, when the representatives of Kemalist positivism (the military) have less influence over the civilian government. Saçmal (2013) also notes how positivism is criticized by scholars within the DİB; however, the date he provides for the start of this stance towards positivism is in 2007. The data within this study reveals that science is undertaken in a positive context up until 2010.

Overall, there seems to be a general trend in the themes discussed above. The ideas of nationality and “Turkishness” seem to be much more prevalent in the first period than in the second; indeed, the word “Turk” or its derivatives do not occur at all in the second period. This points towards a preoccupation with the idea of nationality and its marriage with Islam in the first period, akin to the Kemalist project pursued during the establishment of the Republic. The second period has a more inclusive language in this respect; segregation regarding ethnic differences are clearly shunned, owing most probably to the government’s attempts at including the Kurdish population into their idea of society. This is also evident through the focus on terrorism as a global phenomenon rather than a national issue, which could be tied into the AKP government’s initiation of the “Peace Process”. The second period focuses explicitly on terrorism as a national issue and a threat to the sovereignty of the nation.

The use of Atatürk's name clearly distinguishes both periods, as the name is not used once in actually referring to the historical figure in the second period. The first period paints an almost saintly picture of Atatürk through the use of the name in sermons commemorating national holidays and historic events, while also legitimizing the regime he established. These data are also evidence for the appropriate separation of the two periods; the name is used consistently and uniformly in the first period (even occurring in one of the final sermons marking Bardakoğlu's term), and as soon as the cut-off point is reached, the name is not used again. The use of the word "Ottoman" does not point towards a significant distinction between the two periods, although Mehmed II's characterization as a "Turkish Emperor" as opposed to an "Ottoman Emperor" (as in the second period) is noteworthy. Finally, the word "science" is used much more frequently and is given more approval in the first period, while the second period approaches the term in a more skeptical manner, owing possibly to the fact that the word is associated with the positivist vision of Kemalism.

In conclusion, the data analyzed can be said to fit the theoretical framework moderately well. Themes such as "Turkishness" and "ethnicity" are less prevalent in the second period since the AKP increased its power and pursued its policy of desecularization (or change in official Islam); this comes at a time when AKP has crossed the threshold towards the end of 2010, appointed Görmez as president of the DİB and increased its power vis-à-vis the Kemalist state institutions, or reached "commanding heights", in Karpov's (2010) terms. Similarly, the Kurdish issue is addressed by a more inclusive idea of Islam in the second period, and the word "terror" is used in a global context rather than a national context; this is due both to Görmez's more inclusive approach to cultural diversity and the AKP's policy of building bridges with the Kurdish secessionist movement after 2010. The occurrence of the word "Atatürk" fits the desecularization framework quite well, as sermons in the second period do not contain this word at all; considering that Atatürk is symbolic of secularism, it is easy to see how the DİB in the second period under Görmez refrained from using this word. As Atatürk was an important symbol for the Kemalist state, the AKP would wait until their power had diminished, so to speak, to cut this word out of the sermons. Finally, the word "science" also fits well within the framework as it shows a more positivist strand of Islam in the first period and an Islam more skeptical towards positivism in the second; both Görmez's (2012) views

on positivism and Erdoğan's statement regarding the difference between "science (bilim)" and "knowledge (ilim)" in 2014 corroborate this finding.

It is possible that a number of other distinguishing themes may be present. However, the difficulty of determining these themes lies in finding the words used to describe these themes. Because the sermons are generally cautious not to have explicit references to sensitive issues, and thus it is difficult to determine whether these issues have been taken up at all. Although it has its foundations in religion, the *türban* (headscarf) issue, for instance, is not taken up in any of the sermons most probably because it has political connotations as well. Similarly, it is difficult to discern whether the use of the word "martyrdom (şehitlik, şehadet)" is a distinguishing factor between the two periods, since, although it is also a cultural concept, it is foremost a religious one.



## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION

Considering that sermons are useful tool to disseminate official religion through the state apparatus, it is surprising that the issue has been neglected up until recently. Nevertheless, the literature on the DİB and on the cleavage of Kemalism and political Islam in Turkey reveals that both camps have attempted to propagate their version of Islam in society through various means, and that the DİB has been one of the tools that has been used to this end. By providing an analysis of the literature on the two camps of Kemalism and political Islam, this study has aimed to show some of the themes that are prevalent and salient in the two “official” versions of it. To show how the AKP gained power and was able to subvert the Kemalist institutions of the state, a theoretical framework has been put forward; this theoretical framework was based on the argument that as soon as the AKP was able to consolidate its power, it was able to thwart the Kemalist ideology that was present in the DİB, and in a way desecularized this institution through its newly gained power. This framework was then put to the test through an analysis of Friday sermons published by the DİB; the analysis revealed that the sermons reflected the AKP’s increased influence over the DİB once it achieved a position of “commanding heights” (Karpov, 2010). Overall, the sermons within the first period were heavily influenced by Kemalism and its idea of official Islam, which utilized religion as a compliment to the idea of a nation-state and to Turkish nationalism; the second period saw a significant change in this respect, with emphasis being placed on a more inclusive idea of Islam and Islam as a unifying ideology rather than nationalism.

It is not surprising that such a change took place within the DİB, because the institution’s subjugation to the state throughout history is evidence enough for one to predict that it would reflect the ideology of the changing political order. However, a systematic analysis of sermons within which this political order changes reveals this

change in official Islam in a more robust manner; it seems that for the first time in history, the successors of political Islam have gained the upper hand in embedding their ideology within state institutions and have a mass communication tool (the sermons produced by the DİB) to convey this ideology to prayer attending Muslims. In any case, this is not a judgment of whether one version is preferable to the other, but a study which shows that the status quo has changed to favor the version of Islam adopted by the political Islamists.

Nevertheless, it should be acknowledged that this thesis does have its drawbacks. The most important of these is the application of the theoretical framework. While the data fits the theoretical framework moderately well, it could be the case that there is not one desecularization process (or the process of change in official religion) going on that separates the two distinct periods put forward in this thesis. It may be the case that a number of different desecularization processes occur at different times as opposed to one mass desecularization process; the process that increased or decreased the frequency of words such as “Turkishness” or “ethnicity”, or changed the context within which these words were used, may be entirely different to the process which changed the context within which the word “science” is used. As such, similar studies in the future may need to isolate different processes of desecularization and assess different concepts with respect to the process that affected these concepts.

Methodological issues also had an impact on this thesis. Because there are no predetermined sets of words that distinguish the two versions of Islam, it is particularly difficult to assess which issues were relevant in differentiating the two periods. The study was undertaken using a mixed methods approach that incorporated both content analysis and discourse analysis; the advantage of using these methods together is that both the frequency of words and the context within which these words occur can be observed. However, the drawback to this method is that, when there are a large number of cases, it is not possible to look at all of the cases in detail. In a sense, the data is picked to look at the cases which are more relevant to the study at hand; this may lead to a confirmation bias where only those data which corroborate the expectations of the study are taken into account. Future studies may overcome this problem by creating word groups associated with the two different versions of Islam, by looking at statements made by officials who represent

each camp, and then analyzing how much concurrence there is between these words and the content of the sermons. A content analysis approach can also be pursued by analyzing the occurrence of these words in the same sentence with other words which have positive or negative connotations.

These drawbacks aside, this study has aimed at least to show a general trend towards a change in content and outlook in sermons prepared by the DİB. It can be argued that the causal mechanism is much more different than the one presented here; a number of other cut-off points, such as the Ergenekon or Sledgehammer trials which caused the imprisonment of a number of high-level military officials, or the 2011 general elections in which the AKP gained close to 50% of the vote, may also have been used to distinguish between the two periods. The justification for using the 2010 Constitutional Referendum was that it made difficult for the AKP to be closed down and empowered the party vis-à-vis the Kemalist state. It may be that all of these events were variables that increased the power of the AKP and led it to officially endorse a certain version of Islam through the DİB. Further studies may have to delineate the effect of each case to see how it affected the consolidation of AKP's power and how each case influenced issues covered in the sermons of the DİB.

Even with these drawbacks, however, this thesis has at least attempted to show a change in the position of the DİB and hence the sermons it produces, if not anything else. The causal mechanism may indeed be different, nevertheless, this thesis hopes to pave the way for more detailed research on the analysis of DİB and Friday sermons in the future.

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APPENDIX A: THEMES OF THE SERMONS STUDIED

Themes Analyzed in Sermons	Number of Sermons used in Discourse Analysis
Turkishness (“Türk”,“Türklük”), the Nation (“Millet”), race (“ırk”), ethnicity (“etnik”) and Kurdish (“Kürt”)	9
Terrorism (“terör”)	4
Ottomanism (“Osmanlı”)	4
Atatürk	3
Science (“bilim”) and knowledge (“ilim”)	5

**Table 1:** This table shows the themes that are covered in the analysis section of chapter 4, with the number of sermons analyzed for each theme being shown in the left column.

APPENDIX B: WORDCOUNT OF SERMONS

Word	Word count	Word	Word count	Word	Word count
cumhuriyet	12	milletimize	13	türkiye	13
cumhuriyet	8	milletimizi	12	türkiyemizin	1
cumhuriyeti	3	milletimizin	36	türkleri	1
cumhuriyetimizi	1	milletin	29	türklerin	1
cumhuriyetimizin	2	milletinde	2	vatan	47
cumhuriyetin	3	milletine	4	vatana	3
cumhuriyettir	1	milletini	3	vatanda	7
cumhuriyet'tir	3	milletinin	5	vatandaş	1
cumhurun	5	milletiz	3	vatandaşımız	5
devlet	16	milletler	11	vatandaşımızın	1
devlete	1	milletlerde	1	vatandaşlarımız	5
devleti	3	milletlerden	2	vatandaşlarımızın	5
devletimiz	2	milletlere	2	vatandaşlık	4
devletimizi	1	milletleri	6	vatandır	2
devletimizin	5	milletlerin	21	vatanı	12
devletin	3	millettir	1	vatanıdır	1
devletine	1	milli	59	vatanımız	12
devletinin	1	millî	81	vatanımıza	4
devletlerdeki	1	ordu	7	vatanımızda	3
devletleri	1	ordudan	1	vatanımızı	10
devletlerin	3	ordudur	2	vatanımızın	8
devletlerinin	1	ordular	2	vatanın	8
memleketi	2	ordulara	2	vatanına	6
memleketimize	2	orduları	1	vatanını	14
memleketimizin	1	ordularımız	1	vatanının	2
memleketlerine	2	ordularımızın	2	vatanlarında	1
millet	64	orduların	2	vatanlarından	1
milletçe	15	ordularına	2	vatanlarını	1
millete	3	ordularının	1	vatansever	1
milleti	10	ordularıyla	1	vatansız	1
milletimin	2	türk	20		
milletimiz	35	türkistanın	1		
<b>Total</b>	730				
<b>Total Word Count of All Sermons</b>	167497				
<b>Frequency</b>	0,0043				

**Table 2:** This table shows the frequency of words denoting national values within the period 2003-2010.

Word	Word count	Word	Word count	Word	Word count
cumhuriyet	2	milletimize	13	türk	1
cumhuriyetimiz	1	milletimizi	6	türkçe	1
cumhuriyetimizin	1	milletimizin	29	türkistan'da	1
cumhuriyetinin	1	milletin	9	türkiye	5
devlet	4	milletine	1	türkîye	15
devleti	1	milletini	2	türkmen	3
devletimiz	2	milletiz	2	türkmenlerinin	1
devletin	1	milletler	4	vatan	40
devletiniz	3	milletlerce	1	vatana	6
memleketidir	1	milletleri	1	vatandaş	1
memleketimizde	1	milletlerin	5	vatandaşımızın	1
memleketimize	1	milli	14	vatandaşlarımıza	4
memleketimizi	2	millî	3	vatandır	2
memleketimizin	2	milliyeti	1	vatanı	7
memleketin	1	ordu	5	vatanım	1
memleketini	1	ordudan	1	vatanımız	1
memleketleri	1	ordudur	1	vatanımıza	2
memleketlerin	1	ordular	1	vatanımızda	1
memleketlerini	1	orduları	1	vatanımızı	1
millet	32	ordularımızı	1	vatanımızın	6
milletçe	9	ordusuna	1	vatanın	4
millete	3	ordusunun	1	vatanına	1
milletimiz	22	ordusuyla	1	vatanını	3
milletimizce	1	orduya	1	vatansı	1
milletimizdeki	2	orduyu	1		
<b>Total</b>	312				
<b>Total Word Count of All Sermons</b>	152080				
<b>Frequency</b>	0,0020				

**Table 3:** This table shows the frequency of words denoting national values within the period 2010-2016. Note that the number of different words used in this period is less than the previous (74 as opposed to 94). This is due to the fact that the previous period contained the same root words with a higher number of suffixes, or due to typos.

## APPENDIX C: EXCERPTS FROM SERMONS USED IN THE ANALYSIS

02.12.2011

Aşure; paylaşmanın, dayanışmanın ve birlikteliğin simgesidir. Aşure ayında bir araya gelen farklı nimetlerin, aynı ortak tada katkı sağladıkları gibi, milletimiz asırlardır birlikte yaşamının gereği olarak sevinç ve tasayı, muhabbet ve meşakkati paylaşmaya devam etmektedir.

29.08.2003

Bundan 81 yıl önce vatanımızın bağımsızlığına, milletimizin hürriyetine kasteden düşmanlara karşı milletimiz Mustafa Kemal ATATÜRK'ün önderliğinde ayyıldızlı bayrağımızı, canımızdan aziz bildiğimiz vatanımızı koruyarak düşmanları yurdumuzdan kovmuş, özgürlüğümüzü ve bağımsızlığımızı yeniden tesis etmiştir.

30.08.2013

Zaferler ayında biz müminlere düşen, zaferlerle övünmek değil; bu zaferlerin nasıl elde edildiğini; zaferlerin arkasındaki yüksek inanç ve ruhu iyi anlamaktır.

29.08.2014

Din, iman, millet, vatan ve mukaddesat uğruna gerektiğinde candan ve canandan vazgeçmeyi göze almışlardır.

24.10.2003

[Bu asil millet] Asırlardan beri hakim olduğu Anadolu topraklarında, milli egemenliğini aynen korumuş, Türkiye Cumhuriyeti adıyla yeni bir devlet kurmuş ve 29 Ekim 1923 tarihinde de bunu, bütün dünyaya ilân etmiştir.

28.08.2009

Müslüman Türk Milletinde vatan sevgisi, onun engin imanının bir yansımasıdır.

19.03.2004

Okuma bilenler ellerinde Kur'an-ı Kerim, cennete girmeye hazırlanıyorlar. Bilmeyenler kelime-i şahadet getirerek yürüyorlar. Bu Türk askerindeki ruh kuvvetini gösteren, şâyân-ı hayret bir misaldir. Emin olmalısınız ki, Çanakkale muharebesini kazandıran, bu yüksek ruhtur."

26.06.2009

Yüce Kitabımız, "Bütün insanların, aynı ana-babanın, Âdem ile Havva'nın soyundan gelen kardeşler olduğunu, birbirleriyle teâruf için, yani tanışmak ve barış içinde yaşamak için kavimlere, milletlere ayrıldığını" bildirir. Nitekim Türkiye dışındaki birçok Türk halkının dilinde barış kelimesinin karşılığı olarak bugün "tanışlık" kullanılmaktadır.

05.06.2015

Cahiliye döneminde insanlar etnik kökeni, mensup oldukları kavim ve kabileleriyle övünürlerdi ... Irk ve renginden dolayı insanlar hor ve hakir görülür, toplumdan dışlanır ve aşağılanırlardı.

05.08.2011

"Komşusu açken tok yatan bizden değildir" hadisi şerifini kendimize ölçü edinerek dil, din, ırk farkı gözetmeden maddi- manevi ilgiye, sevgiye ve yardıma muhtaç olanları tespit edip onlara yardımcı olalım.

26.06.2015

Mezhep, meşrep, ırk, bölge ve coğrafya farklarını değil, sadece ve sadece Efendimiz (s.a.s)'in Ensar ve Muhacir arasında tesis ettiği "ben" i "biz" "biz" i "bir" yapan İslam kardeşliğini ön plana çıkarmalıyız.

15.03.2013

Şehadet arzusu renk, ırk, dil farkını yok edip ülkenin dört bir yanından gelen yiğitleri bir mevzide buluşturdu.

05.02.2016

Çevremiz bir ateş çemberi ile sarılmışken, Türkmen, Arap ve Kürt binlerce kardeşimiz, barış umuduyla ülkemize sığınıyor.

19.04.2013

Ayrımcılık, ırkçılık, sömürgecilik, şiddet, terör, savaş, istismar, açlık gibi nice küresel sorunların kışkacında yeryüzü sakinleri olarak büyük bir sınavdan geçmekteyiz.

20.11.2015

İslam, vicdanı ve insafi kirlenmiş, yüreği tükenmiş insanlarca terör ve vahşetle birlikte zikredilerek olumsuz bir İslam imajı ve algısı üretilmektedir.

25.11.2003

Ailemizin mutluluğu, milletimizin huzuru, millî birlik ve beraberliğimizin devamı, devletimizin bekâsı için dua ve niyazda bulunalım. Milletçe birlik ve beraberlik içinde bulunduğumuzu gösterelim ve teröre karşı tavrımızı ortaya koyalım.

26.10.2007

Hakkari ilimizde meydana gelen menfur terör saldırıları üzerine gerçekleştirilen Devlet Zirvesi sonrasındaki açıklamada da belirtildiği gibi, "Terör örgütünün bu hain saldırılarla toplumumuzun birlik ve beraberliğini bozmak amacı güttüğü aşıkardır."

19.03.2005

Müslüman varlığını yeryüzünden ebediyen silmeyi amaç edinen zihniyet, Çanakkale boğazından geçerek İstanbul'u ele geçirmek suretiyle ülkemizi parçalamak, milletimizi esir etmek amacıyla 1914 yılı Kasım ayında Osmanlı devletine savaş ilan etti.

16.03.2007

[Zamanın her bakımdan en güçlü devletlerinin askerleri] [a]kıllarınca boğazları geçecekler, Müslüman Türkleri tarih sayfāsından sileceklerdi. Hasta adam dedikleri Osmanlı İmparatorluđunu yok ederek, asırlardır süregelen haçlı zihniyetini dünyaya hakim kılacaklardı.

28.05.2004

Peygamberimizin bu müjdesine kavuşmak şerefi, Türk hükümdarı Fatih Sultan Mehmet ve Onun şanlı ordusuna nasip olmuştur.

24.05.2013

Peygamber'in kutlu müjdesine kavuşma şerefi, bu genç Osmanlı hükümdarına ve onun şanlı ordusuna nasip olmuştur.

24.10.2008

[M]illetimiz, bu büyük zaferin şanlı lideri ve kumandanı Gazi Mustafa Kemal Paşa'nın etrafında, cumhurun yani milletin iradesine saygıyı, sistemin temeline koyan bir yönetim şeklini benimsedi. Bunun adı Cumhuriyet'tir.

23.03.2007

Bilim ise, tabii varlıkların ve olayların nasıl ve ne şekilde işlediğini keşfetme ve açıklama faaliyetidir. Eylemlerinden sorumlu olarak yaratılan insanođlu, etrafında olup bitenlere karşı ilgisiz kalamayacağına göre, onun bilime karşı olumsuz bir tavır içinde olması elbette düşünülemez.

10.06.2011

[İslâm dünyası] bilim ve teknolojide geri kalmanın ağır bedelini ödüyorlar. Ama modern teknoloji insanođlunu nereye götürüyor? Tanınmış bir Batılı düşünürün ifadesiyle, "Her şey gibi modern insanlar da teknolojinin nesnesi, malzemesidir artık..."

19.11.2010

İçinde bulunduđumuz bilim ve teknoloji çağında ahlâkî ve mânevi değerlerin ihmal edildiđi, her geçen gün daha da hissedilir hale gelmiştir.

