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Turkey 2002: Kemalism, Islamism, and Politics in the Light of the February 28 Process

In the 1990s, Turkish politics witnessed the fragmentation of the political center and the rise of the Islamist Welfare Party (Refah Partisi, or RP) from fringe party to a major partner in the coalition government, Refahyol, it formed with the center-right True Path Party (Doğru Yol Partisi, or DYP) in June 1996. With the benefit of hindsight, one might suggest that the Turkish military took the accession of the RP into government as confirmation of its belief that Islamist reactionism, irtica in Turkish, had become a substantial threat to the secular character of the republic. Consequently, on February 28, 1997, the military-dominated National Security Council (NSC) issued the Refahyol coalition government with a list of measures designed to nullify the supposed Islamization of Turkey and fortify the secular system. Subsequent pressure from the NSC, in tandem with the civilian component of the secular establishment, led to the collapse of the coalition government in June 1997.

The ousting of the Refahyol government signaled the start of the military’s plan to refashion Turkey’s political landscape along Kemalist lines.
without actually having to take over power directly. Hence, the phrase “February 28 process” was coined to indicate not only the far-reaching implications of the NSC decisions, but also the suspension of normal politics until the secular correction was completed. This process has profoundly altered the formulation of public policy and the relationship between state and society. No major element of Turkish politics at present can be understood without reference to the February 28 process.

This essay takes issue with three things. First, it seeks to unpack the rationale that underpins the February 28 process and critically assess its impact on Turkish politics and society. Next, it examines the way in which the February 28 process has afforded the Turkish Armed Forces (TAF) even greater scope to influence public policy and to do so with virtually no oversight by the civilian constitutional authority. Finally, it addresses the ways in which political Islam has responded to the process.

**Reconfiguring Politics**

Since the inception of the republic, Kemalism has comprised its guiding vision. It is in essence a Westernizing/civilizing ideology whose incontrovertible maxims are secularism, understood as the separation of religion from political rule; a modern/Western identity and lifestyle; and the cultural homogeneity and territorial unity of the nation. Because the Kemalist Westernization project has relied more on symbols than substance, it has associated publicly visible instances of Islamic identity with reactionism. The ideology is also marked by a visible distaste for politics as a societal activity, and an ambivalent attitude toward the notion of popular legitimacy. Over time, it has been adjusted, at times stalled, but never abandoned or discontinued. Even if the TAF has at times deployed the Kemalist doctrine to suit its own agenda, its basic tenets have not lost their power of appeal and legitimacy both across classes and across the civilian-military divide.

*Kemalism Redefined or Entrenched?* The architects behind the February 28 process grounded their actions in the need to ensure the “continuity” of the basic assumptions of the Kemalist model. The Turkish military, former President Süleyman Demirel (1993–2000), the civil societal network of the secular establishment, media, and large sectors of the populace believe that Islamic reactionism constitutes the chronic, if at times undetectable,
Demonstration by the Association for Atatürkist Thought. Photo by Arif Aşçı.
malaise of the Turkish polity. The former Chief of General Staff General Hüseyin Kıvrkoğlu expresses this sentiment: “Radical Islam may appear gone one day to reemerge the next day . . . it is not possible to say that the danger has vanished.”¹ As a result, the secular establishment’s natural reflex is to remain in a permanent state of alert. They also hold that by sticking to a “purist interpretation of the Kemalist bases of the republic,”² civilian politics can be reconstructed so as to ensure continuity of the Kemalist regime and thereby accrue popular support for it.

Contrary to the “neorepublican” policies that prevailed after the post-1980 military rule when elements of Islam were incorporated into public discourse to provide a moral basis, ideological unity, and some certainty in the face of global capitalism,³ the February 28 process seeks to usher back the republic’s radical secularism. That represents a complete reversal from the republican pattern of state-Islam relations that, in the past, allowed for negotiation, compromise, and reconciliation between Turkey’s political Islamists and the establishment.⁴ This time, however, a string of drastic prosecutorial policy measures were introduced: All primary and secondary school curricula were altered so as to emphasize both the secularist history and character of the republic and the new security threats posed by political Islam and separatist movements. Teaching on Atatürkism was expanded to cover all courses taught at all levels and types of schools.⁵ The secondary school system for prayer-leaders and preachers (imam hatip) was scrapped and an eight-year mandatory schooling system was introduced. Appointments of university chancellors since 1997 were pointedly made from among staunch Kemalists. Teaching programs on Kemalist principles, the struggle against reactionism, and national security issues were also extended to top bureaucrats and prayer leaders.⁶ Finally, military institutions and personnel were actively involved in administering the programs.

If we add to these measures the closing of the Islamic parties and the banning of their key policy makers from active politics, it is clear that the architects of the process aim to ensure that the key political players toe the line—namely, comply with the need to both stabilize the rule of the original Kemalist project and revive the myth of a homogenous nation and society. The moralizing mentality that elevates a suprapolitical Kemalism and secularism to the level of a moral consensus of society is clearly exemplified by the deputy chief of general staff: “Countries that could not
create a common value system are by definition in a state of conflict. Our common value is secular and democratic Turkey within the framework of unitarianism and Atatürkist thought. All movements that do not meet with us on this common value are the enemies of the nation and country, and must be fought against.”

The actual dynamics of the process, however, point at a compromise between a zero-sum understanding of Kemalism and the new realities on the ground. In its drive to reassert secularism, the establishment has run into two principal problems: the political resistance put up largely by the center-right Motherland Party (Anavatan Partisi, or ANAP), which has been part of all governments since June 1997, and the reforms required if Turkey’s EU membership application is to be successful.

Because Tansu Çiller, the chairwoman of the DYP, had already been sidelined and the RP and its successors were clearly discredited and intimidated, Mesut Yılmaz, the chairman of the ANAP, emerged as the main opposition to the secular establishment’s assessment and justification of the necessity and management of the struggle against irtica. The Center-Right’s claim is that irtica, like the preceding communist and Kurdish questions, is a pretext to maintain the power, position, and large budget share of the TAF. In taking a critical stand against the TAF over who should fight against Islamic activism and how, Mesut Yılmaz as the prime minister (July 1997–January 1999) repeatedly expressed the view that irtica was not the number-one question for Turkey: “It is only if they (Islamists) rebel against the state authority that we would have to assign the task to the TAF.” This attitude implies that intervention is justified only if there is “clear and present danger,” as opposed to the view that a preemptive strike is required against the possibility of Islamic dominance. Yılmaz, who ironically enough was favored by the secular establishment to unite the Center-Right as part of the combat against irtica, explicitly accused the high command of trying to reap political gains from the campaign against the Islamists. Furthermore, he argued that he would act against assertions of Islamic identity publicly only on the basis of court verdicts rather than intelligence reports compiled by the military’s working groups. The underlying conundrum for the Center-Right has been the fear of hurting “genuinely devout Muslims,” the conservative bedrock from which they draw their popular support. Their dilemma lies in the fact that the center-right tradition can neither embrace radical secu-
lar policies, nor reject or ignore the secular state ideology. In other words, as Islam-as-culture is the most important icon of its claim to be “modern,” this tradition simultaneously opposes both politicized Islam and radicalized secularism.

The Center-Right’s challenge against the post-February 28 interpretation of secularism has created some political space to engage the secular establishment in an extended process of protest, warning, defiance, and sometimes cooperation and negotiation. The subsequent story of Turkish political life after 1997 can be said to be a constant stretching of the limits imposed by the February 28 process.

The other issue that has at least partly diluted the force of the war mentality against Islamic activism has been the support for Turkey’s firm commitment to Westernize proffered by the Helsinki European Council’s meeting on December 10–11, 1999. To stave off criticism from prodemocracy circles and the European Union (EU), in the official declaration of the historic NSC meeting on February 28, 1997, the high command justified the intervention by arguing that it upheld Turkey’s commitment to full EU membership and presented secularism as “a guarantee not only for the regime but at the same time of democracy, societal peace and the modern lifestyle.” Moreover, pitting the rhetoric of “contemporariness” (a piece of imagery in Turkey that centers around the idea of being Westernlike) against the opposite imagery of “Islamic anachronism” is one way for Ankara to show its endorsement of Western values. In the post-Helsinki era, at least until the Kurdish insurgency was firmly under control, there was also a shift of discourse on the part of the military establishment from a rhetorical language denying violations of democratic norms to an “argumentative rationality” when engaged with its domestic and international critics over specific accusations of democratic deficiencies and human rights violations. The argumentative discourse affirmed the democratic deficiency in Turkey’s political landscape in terms of civil-military relations, individual rights, and the securitization of public life, but tried to justify them on the grounds that, as part of the military’s combat against internal enemies, these measures were “exceptional” and “corrective,” expressing some awareness of the importance of the democracy-centered security architecture in post–Cold War Europe.

However, as the high command is clearly in favor of a controlled entry into the EU, it has simultaneously adopted another discourse claiming that
democratic compromises required in order to join the EU would be too high a price to pay for a state committed to countering irtica and separatist terror. Thus, accession measures should be accepted only on condition that they do not inflame ethnic differences and provide a breeding ground for Islamic principles. The conservatizing impetus that has followed the September 11 attacks has introduced extra incentives for the Turkish general staff to move toward a more conservative-nationalist position with regard to Ankara’s fulfillment of the EU’s Copenhagen Criteria. Moreover, the high command is of the opinion that the EU is a bloc that displays a negative bias toward Turkey and will therefore not let her in. Tuncer Kilinc, secretary-general of the NSC, expressed his opinion in early March 2002 that “the EU will never accept Turkey. . . . Thus, Turkey needs new allies, and it would be useful if Turkey engages in a search that would include Russia and Iran.”

Implementation: Shaping Turkish Politics. The protagonists of the February 28 intervention saw the roots of political Islam in the “irresponsible” policies of Turkey’s political class that uses Islam for partisan purposes and
also in the division of the Center-Right into DYP and ANAP, which was regarded as obstructing the formation of strong, effective, and stable government. Therefore, foremost in their minds was a structural redesign to strengthen Turkey’s political center so as to minimize the importance of what they considered the “noncentric” forces of political Islam and establish a center-party majority rule. This objective would be achieved by the bold use of state power to discipline representative institutions, forge the fragmented center around ANAP, and engage the judiciary in wresting control of political power from the RP and its successors by closing them down. In the end, there are two principal aspects of existing politics that can be attributed to the makings of the February 28 process. They are the crystallization of state-friendly features by almost all political persuasions and a pervasive sense of political inertia, both of which have exacerbated the weakness and instability of Turkey’s civilian politics.

*Gravitating toward the State.* The principles that informed the February 28 process have exposed the state-dependent and state-defending characteristics of all representative platforms in Turkey. Turkey’s Center-Left, as the founder of official republican politics, has always acted as a force fully complicit with the military-civil bureaucracy in subordinating politics and economics to the logic of secular state power. It has also been badly battered since the 1980s by being outflanked by the free-market rhetoric of the New Right. When it gradually embraced the same agenda rather than articulating welfare-state policies, it lent respectability to neoliberalism. Not surprisingly, since the 1997 intervention, the two center-left parties, the Democratic Left Party (Demokratik Sol Parti, or DSP) of Prime Minister Bülent Ecevit and the Republican People’s Party (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi, or CHP) have acted as the agents and defenders of the reconsolidation of nation-state behind the totalizing language of secularism.

Turkey’s Center-Right, which also comes from a tradition articulating rural and urban interests that seemingly oppose puritan Kemalism, has gravitated toward a state-centered discourse. This is so because the political discourse of this tradition was built on an ambiguous and fuzzy set of principles encompassing political, economic, and religious liberalism. Those principles allowed the Center-Right to satisfy its power base through the distribution of state largesse while paying lip service to liberal values. The DYP’s problems with the February 28 process were over the party’s loss
of power and relegation to the sidelines, rather than based on an ethically motivated opposition to the intervention. The ANAP, locus of power in the 1980s, upheld the free-market ideology without seeing any contradiction between supporting the state-imposed political design of the February 28 process and political and economic liberalism. It was only when the party’s alignment with the process was observed to be causing a major electoral slide for the party that it became the major challenger to the new political design.

Since February 28, 1997, Turkish political parties have retreated from a constituency-serving position to a state-supporting one. Neither the rising star of Turkish politics in the 1990s, the nationalist camp represented by the Nationalist Movement Party (Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi, or MHP), nor the Islamists can claim to have articulated an alternative democratic political platform that can act as “the significant other.” The nationalist MHP and the Islamist parties have failed to formulate a solid political bedrock from which to constructively oppose the moral consensus laid down by the February 28 process. Hence, EU accession has become the only instrumental issue with the power to compel progressive change in the country.
The Politics of Inertia. Despite the vast changes in political, social, economic, and geopolitical realities, the thrust of politics has stagnated since February 28, 1997. The current three-party coalition government comprising the center-right ANAP, the center-left DSP, and the nationalist MHP has been in office longer than any coalition in Turkish history. But the government does not owe its durability to imaginative politics, empathy with the fears and hopes of the masses, and its outward-looking, competitive drive for power. On the contrary, it owes its durability to a new version of the politics of inertia, or bloc-politics, which is promoted by domestic and international business circles to bring stability and inspire confidence in the markets. The core bloc of the government, comprised of ANAP and DSP, first emerged as an alternative to the Refahyol coalition government in 1997. With the inclusion of the conservative-nationalist MHP after it emerged as the second largest party in the April 1999 elections, it was thought that this bloc would bring some stability into politics. The formation and survival of this bloc have also been facilitated by the decline of the Turkish Left as well as by the tacit understanding that there is a de facto military veto against any prospective governments where DYP and RP and their successors can participate.

Given that the bloc politics is basically due to the failure of Turkey’s political persuasions, be it on the left or right, to articulate any pattern of thought other than that of defending the status quo, the troika stays in power because it is a government by default. That it stays despite its policy failures—culminating in the most serious economic crash in the history of the republic on February 21, 2001, which effectively forced the government to seek a massive new standby emergency aid package from the International Monetary Fund (thus saddling the Turkish taxpayer with even further international debt)—is a sign of the absence of political synergy or a credible parliamentary alternative, and the officials’ abject disregard for the concerns of those they represent.

Moreover, in the absence of a tradition of resigning from public office, Prime Minister Ecevit’s refusal to step down, despite his deteriorating health and massive defections from his party in the summer of 2002, plunged the country into a state of political uncertainty. The government could survive only by calling for early elections on November 3, 2002. The EU-required political reforms, necessary to start accession negotiations by the end of this year to qualify Turkey for full membership, could be passed
only thanks to the last-minute initiative of the ANAP, itself desperate to institute the reforms for the elections and thereby avoid political extinction. It would not be wrong to suggest that the pervasive sense of political inertia in the country and the absence of serious challenges to the extant hierarchy of power is largely a function of a trend in evidence since February 28, 1997, namely, the urge to secure the country against potential threats to the Kemalist doctrine. That outlook has led to the closure of public debate on key issues and caused the existing political class to subcontract the resolution of crucial problems to the civil-military bureaucracy.16 One writer, in referring to the dominance of the security-first outlook, speaks of a "dual-track government," in which there is a certain division of labor between the TAF and the representative institutions: "It is not that the military has assumed the power of governing; rather, they have set much of the contentious political agenda and then put pressure on the government to enact it. The power of the military (exerted through the NSC) has, in the past two years, increasingly encroached on areas traditionally . . . the prerogative of the nation's elected civilian leaders."17 Without formally governing, the military's behind-the-scenes maneuvering has successfully managed, perhaps unintentionally, to snuff out any meaningful space for democratic debate and carefully considered renewal.

All in all, the post–February 28 political design has been implemented only to a limited extent, mainly because the problems of political Islam and a fragmented center are seen from a rather mechanical prism and regarded as being alterable by manipulating the technical rules of the game that organize political life. The new model also aimed at promoting stability by enhancing discipline and authority in the public sphere rather than promoting regime capabilities through more effective governance, political legitimacy, and expanded democracy. Considerations of connections between the transformative effects of market policies specific to the countries of the near-periphery and their effect on the empowerment of political Islam are absent. Furthermore, as the "creeping Islamization of Turkey" is attributed to the strategies of irresponsible, weak, inefficient political agents, politics is understood as needing a dose of moral injection in terms of framing public interest as the triumph of the "good" forces against "evil," the victory of secularism against the creeping threat of the Islamization/feudalization of life. The question to address therefore is whether the February 28 process, in steering civilian politics in a particu-
lar direction to strengthen center politics and keep Islamic parties out of power, has perilously enhanced the weakness of civilian politics in Turkey.

**TAF As Guardians**

The Turkish constitutions have not openly proclaimed any guardianship role for the military. However, the esteem with which the military has historically been held and the broad definition of what constitutes a security issue and who defines it means that the realm of influence of TAF goes significantly beyond its counterparts in other democratic societies. It is "not only a professional military organization but a core element of Turkey's political system," enjoying a high degree of political and institutional autonomy. Backed by that mantle of authority, it is well positioned to pursue its historically mandated guardianship role, a mandate that effectively provides the military with an "ideal for following a political agenda of its own."

In the 1990s, the TAF has expanded its domain of jurisdiction by redefining the idea of national security. By identifying Islamic and Kurdish groups as potential internal enemies, it is effectively able to control the pub-
lic agenda. In doing this, it takes advantage of the privileged powers and position that it has by virtue of its role within the NSC. Hence, the extent of the TAF's influence over public policy has increased, while at the same time the ability of civilians to correct the imbalance in civil-military relations has decreased. Given that the magnitude of the Islamic threat is perceived to be potentially present in all parts of the country and in all sectors of society, national security considerations are now enshrined in legislation on antiterrorism, media, public order, political parties, education, civil rights, and liberties. The insertion of national security concerns into public policy has significantly altered the meaning of democracy in Turkey by subordinating individual and group rights and liberties to the demands of security. The endorsement of Turkey's candidate status in the Helsinki Summit in 1999, however, acts as the main driving force behind the parliamentary initiative to either modify or repeal the draconian features of national security laws and practices.

Perhaps the most disturbing concern is that what qualifies as an internal defense threat is defined by the military itself. The military sets the standards for measuring and judging the Islamic threat as a life or death question and has created new organizational devices to combat it. Especially after the 1995 elections, the TAF has been involved in making and breaking governments, initiating crucial policy decisions, becoming directly involved in political intrigue, issuing public demands and warnings to civilians, structuring new bills through its own research units and departments, launching campaigns to inform the public about the possibility that political Islam might be acting as cover for reactionary intentions, having the final say on whether or not the 1999 elections would be held, shaping foreign policy, and continuously impinging on the daily operations of elected governments.

Consequently, the military is more exposed to charges of partisanship and is more vulnerable to criticisms. Given the fact that the military's traditional "most trusted institution" status was based on its image of being "above politics," one could argue that by remaining in the political arena it weakens the very foundations of its own strength. The increasing intolerance of the military for any criticism or alternative views, which we can observe in the frequency with which the institution responds to what it considers counterpositions taken by public figures, reflects its increasing sense of insecurity about its status. It is perhaps for this reason that the military
aims to construct its own support base by acting like a political party directly addressing the public. However, this strategy feeds back into the weakening of the military’s carefully nurtured “above politics” image.

A major element of rupture with the past is the way the military’s priority has shifted from invoking societal indifference and fear to producing consent and support. In trying to undermine the RP’s popular appeal and create an order characterized by social discipline, centralized authority, and hierarchical integration, the military has been very successful in establishing a new relationship with targeted groups in society. It has appealed directly to the organized groups of the modernized urban-secular sectors—the business world, media, academia, public prosecutors, judges, leaders of civil societal associations—and even held briefing meetings with them to warn of the extent and magnitude of the Islamic threat. The rising salience of civil society for the general staff, however, has not arisen from the search for a free public space, rule of law, limited state power, democratic consensus and compromise over power sharing. On the contrary, there is a widespread belief among the secular-urbanites that the intensity of the Islamic threat may require the suspension of democratic freedoms and limitation of representative principles and institutions. To this end, these sectors have given the TAF a strong hand in crushing what they see as a threat to the regime’s existence.

Islamist Politics: Division, Adaptation, and Change

Thus far we have discussed the nature of the February 28 process, the way in which it modified the political landscape, and the way it signaled the military’s appropriation of civilian policy making. However, we have yet to consider the way in which the process affected those who were its explicit target, as well as the ways in which they reacted to it. The main target of the process, the RP, was founded in July 1983 as the third political party of the Islamist National Outlook Movement (Milli Gorus Hareketi, or MGH), the expression of Islamism in the political arena since 1970. It was closed down by the Constitutional Court on January 16, 1998, on the grounds that it had become a focal point of antisecular activities. With this closure, a five-year ban on the political activities of its leader, Necmettin Erbakan, and five other top policy makers was imposed. The RP was succeeded by the Virtue Party (Fazilet Partisi, or FP, founded in December 1997), again closed down on June 22, 2001, for its antisecular activities and
for violating the constitutional stipulation that a permanently closed party, the RP, cannot be opened again. Although the FP claimed to be a different party than the RP and tried to follow a different political style, until its closure it too was under the questioning eyes of the secularist establishment of Turkey, which charged it with being the new flag bearer of the RP and disguising its reactionary nature from the public.25

What has been the impact of this intimidation on political Islam? The question cannot be answered adequately without reference to the division of the movement into the reformist and traditionalist factions.26 The ban imposed on Erbakan, the founder of the MGH and its authority figure, enabled the FP to break free from his direct influence and enabled the reformists to publicize their discontent with the policies of the traditionalists.27 The movement was eventually divided into two parties after the closure of the FP: the traditionalists’ Felicity Party (Saadet Partisi, or SP, founded on July 20, 2001) and the reformists’ AKP, founded on August 14, 2001. In what follows we will delineate and discuss the different readings of the February 28 process as reflected by each faction’s preferred policies and political styles.

The Traditionalist Wing: Paying Lip Service to Kemalism and Democracy? In terms of their politics, both the RP and the FP tried to adapt themselves to the February 28 process conditions by de-Islamizing their discourse, emphasizing a discourse that avoided any societal tensions, and taking a low-profile, nonconfrontational, and moderate stance. On the basis of what he called “unripe and transitory” conditions, Erbakan rejected the RP’s provincial leaders’ demands for a strong opposition against the crackdown of the February 28 process.28 Its successor party, FP, also employed a consensus-seeking strategy, expressing no discontent over the undemocratic nature of the crackdown on Islamic identity. Its leader, Recai Kutan, for example, went as far as declaring that “they will not be a party to any conflict”29 and that “they will not bring up the issue of the headscarf even though it is the right thing to do so.”30 He even lent some legitimacy to the February 28 process by indicating that they understand the TAF’s sensitivity on secularism.31 It must be pointed out that this obedient stance was motivated by the FP’s massive sense of insecurity—so much so that on that particular point, the party even asked the opinion of the chief of staff about its political program.32

The FP’s acquiescence was redressed by a discourse endorsing democ-
Demonstration against the headscarf ban at the university. Photo by Arif Aşçı.
racy and the idea of a "nonideological state" as the basic principles of the modern world. "We know," Kutan stated, "what it is like to be threatened, blackmailed, silenced," and "therefore no one could value democracy better than us." Before the February 28 process, the Islamist movement saw the false consciousness of the Westernizing elite as Turkey's basic problem. This elite, it was argued, prevented people's moral development, which was the prerequisite of economic development and democracy. Erbakan and his team did not question the nonpluralist form of state-society relations, but singled out only the secularist substance of it as a focus of criticism. Moreover, Erbakan's RP claimed that the MGH represented the true national will of the whole society and appealed to the majoritarian principle to support that conclusion. The RP, therefore, seemed to be willing to utilize the Kemalist legal and political framework, which was instituted to enforce a Western lifestyle by the republican regime, to switch the secular bias of a nonpluralist state-society relationship to one that was Islamic. Hence, for example, the idea of making Friday a holiday—as is the case in Islamic societies—was defended not in terms of the right of believers to practice Islam in a democratic context, but rather in terms of the fulfillment of the state's legal duty to provide religious services within the framework of secularism as drawn by Atatürk. Consequently, it was not unthinkable for the secular Turkish public to conceive that the RP posed a threat to their lifestyle.

Although the FP endorsed the idea of a nonideological state, it still maintained its predecessor's nonpluralist understanding of society. For example, in one of his visits to EU authorities in Brussels, the FP's pro-Erbakan leader, Kutan, denied that there is a Kurdish problem in Turkey. When, on rare occasions, the existence of the Kurdish problem was acknowledged, the FP's alternative was little more than to uphold the solution once proposed by the RP: relying on the assumption that the real source of identity is Islam, the suggested solution was to strengthen the national and moral values by relaxing the pressures on religion so as to maintain the "community," rather than a democratic-pluralist restructuring. Consequently, the FP's understanding of democracy was self-servingly restricted to legal and constitutional amendments that would make the closure of the parties difficult and remove the ban on Erbakan's political activities. As a corollary, instead of pressing for institutional and noninstitutional changes that would make the state nonideological, which was the FP's declared priority,
the FP used democracy as a window dressing to endear itself to the public in a democracy-dominated age.

According to a distinguished former deputy of the RP, Aydınlı Menderes, the traditionalists not only lack the ability to carry out radical reforms in the party, but also seem willing to return to the substance and style of politics they conducted in the RP whenever the grip of the February 28 process relaxes. Indeed, both Erbakan and Kutan, after the closure of their parties, asserted that they will not change their political stance and ideals, which they believed were correct. The traditionalists' current political party, the SP, not unexpectedly adopts a course of return to the basic tenets of the RP's discourse in a somewhat modified manner.

Lessons the Reformists Drew from the Past. The reformist faction, which eventually formed the AKP under the leadership of the prominent ex-mayor of Istanbul, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, reads the February 28 process and the RP's role in the making of it somewhat differently. Unlike the traditionalists, the reformists are (self-)critical of the political style and policies of the RP, which, they believe, contributed to the February 28 process with its political mistakes. For them, the RP's policies reached an impasse because it let religious issues dominate its political agenda, it underplayed the importance of consensus-seeking and dialogue-building with the other sectors of the society, and it did not address itself to a broader public. As such, the reformist group's moderate discourse seemed to spring from the recognition of the heterogeneous nature of the society. Another conclusion the reformists have drawn from the Refahyol experience is the need to acknowledge the guardianship role of the military in Turkey, which, they considered, should be taken into account as a historical reality. "If we are to be realistic," a leading reformist said, "we should not come up against and clash with the military."

The reformists' stated goal was to establish a party that would refrain from employing a rhetorical discourse, would not restrict its political horizon to Islamic issues, would pay special attention to pluralism by building a dialogue with non-Islamist sectors of the society, and would be predictable, dynamic, and open to change, with no hidden agenda on critical issues. In wanting to bring about the transformation of Islamism, they tried to eliminate what they saw as the root cause of the maladies of the RP, namely the lack of intraparty democracy, self-criticism, and transparency.
The reformist AKP persistently rejects being Islamist, defines itself as a conservative democratic party, and emphasizes the democratic character of the party organization, its spirit of teamwork, and the importance of consensus-seeking in politics. But since for Erdoğan, politics by definition should take up popular issues and demands related to religious life, the AKP’s moderation does not mean that it will not bring religious issues to the political arena, especially when the AKP’s intention to broaden its support base without alienating the traditional constituency of the Islamist movement is taken into account. Hence, for example, it aims to raise the issue of the ban on the wearing of headscarves in educational institutions in the political arena as a matter of basic rights, but not as an issue of religion or religiosity. The AKP cites its attempt to address itself to a broader public while taking up the issues related to public visibility of Islamic identity as evidence of its will to reconcile secularism and Islam through a pluralist public sphere in Turkey. Turkey’s secularist establishment, they believe, will respect moderate religiosity in a pro-Islamic party if it refrains from employing a rhetorical discourse and if it maintains a transparent political agenda.
Despite some doubts, legal pressures, and ambiguities concerning Erdoğan’s eligibility to be elected as a member of parliament, according to almost all opinion polls, the AKP is the most popular party in Turkey. Admittedly, this is due to the AKP’s capitalization on the political vacuum created by the immobility of Turkey’s existing political contenders. In doing so, the AKP promises a government that will not sacrifice the system’s stability and development merely for the sake of acquiring political benefits. In a context in which corruption is rampant and the economy is in severe crisis, such a discourse is appealing. Nevertheless, as it is a promise of “performance” and not a societal vision in which Islam and secularism can be reconciled, such a discourse is more technocratic than political in its outlook.

Conclusion

The political language of the February 28 process presents itself in the form of an ambiguous double discourse. This represents the crisis of epistemology in Kemalist thought. On the one hand, it is correct to say that the central element in the February 28 strategy is the subordination of the present to the past, politics to the market, individual to the wisdom and moral guardianship of the secular establishment, and sociopolitical differences to unity and uniformity. Yet both the establishment and the actors of political Islam, in the process, appropriate a language of holding themselves up as believers in “democracy.” Given that the iron rule of Turkish politics is that the practice of democracy is not permitted to have a hallow content but must be rooted in a secular existence, this is hardly surprising. Nor can the logic of power based on the belief that “the confession of secularism is identical with democratic conviction” be sustained in modern global circumstances in a country struggling to obtain EU membership. Likewise, political Islam provides the mirror image of Kemalism in terms of its conception of democracy not as a hallow notion, but as a totalizing and restrictive sense.

Notes

5 “ Atatürkçülük Her Derste Okutulacak” [Atatürkism is going to be taught in all courses], Hurriyet, June 27, 1998.
6 “Yönetici Memura Inkilap Tarihi Dersi” [History of the republic course (given) to top bureaucrats], Milliyet, December 12, 1995.
7 “GATA Açılışında Laiklik Uyarısı” [Secularism warning in the opening ceremony of GATA (Gülhane Military Medicine Academy)], Radikal, October 2, 2001.
8 “Yılmaz’dan Askere Sınır” [Yılmaz constrains the officers], Radikal, July 11, 1998.
9 “Hükümetin Zor Günleri” [Hard days for the government], Milliyet, March 14, 1998.
10 “Yılmaz: Komutanların Hakkıdr” [Yılmaz: It is the right of the commanders], Sabah, March 21, 1998.
12 We borrow the idea that at one stage of internalization of human rights norms, there is a move from “rhetorical discourse” to an “argumentative rationality,” from Thomas Risse and Kathryn Sikkink. The significant component in this move is that the logic of argumentation over human rights violations in public entraps the political class in its own rhetoric, enabling them to move toward a true dialogue. See Thomas Risse and Kathryn Sikkink, “The Socialization of International Human Rights Norms into Domestic Practices: Introduction,” in The Power of Human Rights, International Norms and Domestic Change, ed. Thomas Risse, Stephen C. Ropp, and Kathryn Sikkink (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 2–3.
15 The political crisis deepened when Foreign Minister Ismail Cem, six other ministers, and about seventy defected deputies left Ecevit’s party to launch a new party on July 12, 2002, in defiance of Ecevit’s refusal to step aside and name a successor. Kemal Dervis, the former minister of state and the overseer of the ongoing IMF-designed stabilization program, was expected to join in the new movement, which later became the New Turkey Party. Until Dervis’s declaration in mid-August 2002 that he would not join the New Turkey Party, the initiative was halted by Turkey’s secular establishment and business and international circles as potentially capable of stemming the tide of the Islamic Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, or AKP) and speeding up the process of starting Turkey’s accession talks with the EU.
17 Heath W. Lowry, “Turkey’s Political Structure on the Cusp of the Twenty-First Century,”

18 The chief example is Act No. 2945 on the NSC and the National Security Council General Secretariat, which assigns significant and broad political powers to the NSC, placing it on par with the executive.


22 On April 29, 1997, the Turkish General Staff announced a radical change in their basic doctrine (the National Military Defense Concept). Henceforth priority would be given to combating internal threats from, primarily, Islamic activism and, secondarily, the Kurdish separatism, rather than safeguarding against interstate wars and external threats. This new document replaced the one formulated on November 18, 1992, singling out Kurdish terrorist acts as the primary security threat to the state. Both documents were prepared by the secretariat of the NSC and became governmental policy. The parliament was not fully informed about this decision. The defeat inflicted on the PKK by the capture, arrest, trial, and conviction of its leader, Abdullah Öcalan, reinforced this shift.

23 Article 35 of the Military Internal Service Code assigns the military the task of safeguarding the territorial unity and the republic itself. Furthermore, Act No. 2945 assigns three important functions to the NSC secretariat, which enables it to act like the council of ministers. First, the secretary (a general) has the authority to prepare the agenda of the meetings. Next, he is authorized to follow up the implementations of the decisions reached in the NSC meetings and passed to the ministers to act upon with priority consideration. Finally, the secretary can present his suggestions on domestic and foreign policy to the council of ministers directly.

24 A new unit called the Western Study Group (Batı Çalışma Grubu, or BCG) was instituted within general staff headquarters to collect information about the political orientations of civil society groups, mayors, governors, government employees, political party cadres, and media personalities. Moreover, by a governmental decree published in the official gazette on January 9, 1997, a new organ called the Prime Ministerial Crisis Management Center (Başbakanlık Kriz Yönetim Merkezi) was formed within the NSC secretariat to observe and report on “crises,” a vaguely defined term in the decree, and formulate responses to them. As the center was placed within the NSC but called “Prime Ministerial,” it had an ambiguous structural and functional position. It bypassed parliamentary control of its activities and was seemingly responsible to the prime minister but was, in reality, answerable only to the NSC.

25 When the Constitutional Court was handling the closure case filed against the FP, the military issued a judgmental statement that the FP is a source of reactionism, indicating the direction that the case would follow. Before April 1999 general elections, the then-president of the republic, Süleyman Demirel, also equated the FP with the RP.

26 The reformist group constituted usually the younger generation of the MGH such as Abdullah Sener, Salih Kapusuz, Abdullah Gül, and their leader Recep Tayyip Erdoğan.
Bulent Arınç, who has been in the movement ever since its inception, was with the reformists as well as the newcomers to FP such as Ali Coşkun, Abdulkadir Aksu, and Cemil Çiçek, all from the conservative wing of the ANAP. The traditionalists, on the other hand, included the leader of the FP, Recai Kutan, as well as the top administrative officials of the party such as Bahri Zengin, Veyssel Candan, and Oğuzhan Asilturk.

Hence, the first convention of the FP, held on May 14, 2000, was also the first competitive convention in the whole history of the MGH. In this convention, despite Erbakan’s disapproval, the reformist faction challenged the traditionalist leadership of the party and lost by only a small margin, which is usually taken as evidence that Erbakan’s moral authority over the movement was no longer intact.


“Tansu Bize Gelecek 3: Türbanda Dikkatiyiz” [Tansu will join us 3: We are careful about headscarf], Hürriyet, February 8, 1999.

Bilal Çetin, “Kutan’dan FP’nin ‘Sistem Partisi’ Olduğuna Inandırma Çabası” [Kutan’s attempt to convince that the FP is a ‘systemic party’], Radikal, February 11, 1999. This acquiescent stance does not really represent a radical break from the past, when we bear in mind that the main actors of this tradition considered the military the biggest defender and guardian of democracy in Turkey, denied the obvious role of the military in the making of the February 28 process, and refrained from publicizing or precluding the operations of the BCG, which gathered the intelligence that made the process possible in the first place.

“Enine Boyuna Fazilet 2: 28 Şubat Ayni Şiddette Devam Etmiyor” [Comprehensive virtue 2: February 28 process is not continuing with the same momentum], Sabah, March 28, 1999.


Aydın Menderes, interview by Mustafa Karaalioğlu, “Önce Refah Mezara Girdi” [First the RP was buried], Yeni Şafak, November 6, 2000; Aydın Menderes, interview by
Naki Özkan, “Erbakan’ın Son Kullanma Tarihi Geçti” [Erbakan’s expiration date is past], Milliyet, November 8, 2000.


40 Bulent Arınc, interview by Nilgun Cerrahoglu, “Libya Gezisi Bir Felaketti” [Visit to Libya was a disaster], Milliyet, February 22, 1998; Bulent Arınc, interview by Kemal Can, “Refah Partisini Ozlemiyoruz” [We do not miss the RP], ArtıHaber, June 20–26, 1998, 54–55.

41 Bulent Arınç, interview by Mehmet Gündem, “Askerle Polemik Hataydı” [Polemic with the military was a mistake], Zaman, February 6, 2000.


43 Abdullah Gül, interview by Rusen Çakır, “Şeriatçılar Marjinal” [Reactionists are marginal], Milliyet, February 9, 2000.

44 Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, interview by Eyyüp Can, “Şeriat Devletini Ciddiye Alıyorum” [I do not take a Sharia state seriously], Zaman, February 6, 2000.

45 For example, the current president of the republic, Ahmet Necdet Sezer, drew Erdoğan’s attention to the Constitutional Court’s sensitivity on secularism and equated his demand for “a state that respects religion” with “a state based on religion.” See “Sezer’den Erdog’an’a Rejim Uyarısı” [Sezer warns Erdoğan on regime], Cumhuriyet, December 5, 2001.

46 Although he benefited from a law that postponed the penalties of December 2000, Erdoğan’s position as the chairman of the party as well as his eligibility to be elected and to be prime minister remain legally ambiguous. This is so because in January 2002, the Constitutional Court upheld the charge of the Chief Public Prosecutor of High Court of Appeals that Erdoğan could not be a founding member, and therefore not the chairman of the AKP, because of his previous conviction for inciting religious hatred. The court ordered the AKP to comply with its decision within six months. The implications of this decision have divided lawyers. Whether he can lead a party and stand as a candidate for the parliament in the elections is still not clear.

47 Kramer, A Changing Turkey, 87.
Globalization, Civil Society and Citizenship in Turkey: Actors, Boundaries and Discourses

E. FUAT KEYMAN and AHMET ICDUYGU

In recent years, civil society has become one of the most important concerns of academic and public discourse. It would not be a mistake to propose that today there is a strong, effective and even over-glorified talk about and a global agenda for civil society and its role in the process of creating a better and humane world. In this talk and agenda the main intention is to reinvigorate and strengthen civil society politically, organizationally and normatively as a counter-hegemonic and resistance movement against the state-centric world. This paper argues that Turkey does not constitute an exception in this context. Rather, it provides an illuminating case-study in which the crisis of the state-centric modernity has given rise to the elevation of civil society to the status of being an extremely important actor and arena for the democratization of the state–society relations. However, on the basis of the three-year-long research (1999–2002) we have done on ‘the impacts of globalization on Turkey’, the paper also argues that the role of civil society in the process of democratization should be considered a necessary but not a sufficient condition, insofar as it contains both democratic and essentialist discourses about citizenship and identity. In order to substantiate these arguments, the paper will first outline the internal and external factors that have paved the way to the emergence and the increasing importance of civil society in Turkey, and then will shift its attention to the question of ‘the use and the abuse of civil society’. In seeking a proper answer to this question, the paper will focus on the discourses and strategies of different civil society organizations about state, society, citizenship and identity in Turkey.

As we enter the new millennium, it appears to be more and more difficult, if not impossible, to think of politics only with reference to the ‘national context’. Such modern referents of politics as the nation-state, national identity and national economy have been losing their explanatory power for the analysis of social and political change, as a result of the process of increasing interconnect-
edness of societies, making ‘national context’ vulnerable and exposed to global/ regional and local pressures. In fact, what David Held describes as globalization, that is, ‘the widening, the deepening and the speeding up of the interconnected- ness’ in our increasingly globalized world, is forcing us to think of our societal affairs beyond ‘the national context’ (Held et al., 1999).

It can be argued, in this sense, that globalization constitutes a set of historical processes, generating important effects in the ways in which societal affairs in a given national setting are constructed, as well as in the mode in which they are analyzed. While the process of economic globalization, that is, the globalization of capital, is challenging and undermining the authority of nation-states by creating ‘a borderless global market place’, the process of cultural globalization is rendering the idea of national development problematic by giving rise to the emergence of ‘alternative modernities’, cultural identities and the clash between the universal Western values and the particular/local claims to authenticity. These processes also reflect on the formation of politics in a national setting, by creating ‘the limits of politics’ in terms of its boundaries and its actors (Strange, 1992). In this sense, we observe that as a conditioning factor of political action and discourse, globalization limits the ability of political actors both to maintain their dominant position in national politics, and to reduce and confine the boundaries of politics as ‘a territorially-sovereign and nationally-bound activity’.

As a result, we are no longer able to think of politics as a purely national in terms of its actors and its boundaries. Whereas the boundaries and the parameters of politics are being extended to global and local flows/interactions, its actors multiply to the extent that they include inter-, intra-national and global organizations, and their role and activities in solving problems related to the human condition. One of the important sites at which the changing nature of politics has occurred in a global-historical context is that of ‘civil society’, which has been elevated to the status of the ‘key area’ for the possible democratization of the world in which we live (Schechter, 1999).

It has been argued that as an area of public deliberation, civil society has to be strengthened against the nation-state which has been the dominant focus/actor of politics in modernity, in order to create the possibility of democratizing the state–society/individual relations (Keyman, 2000a). This argument has been based upon the common contention/assumption in academic and public discourse that in time when the problems of modernity that have become global/local in their nature and scope are increasingly requiring global solutions, the nation-state itself is not capable at all any more of coping effectively with them and providing effective policies to solve them. These problems, coming into existence as what Anthony Giddens has called ‘the radical consequences of modernity’, being felt in every and each sphere of life, and generating crucial changes in our relations with nature, with different cultures and identities, as well as with ourselves, as the argument follows, have paved the way to the emergence of the calls for participatory democracy, new actors beyond the nation-state and the new language/discourse of politics (Giddens, 1987). It is on the basis of this argument that civil society and civil society organizations have been brought to the fore, even over-glorified, as a necessary condition and an
important actor for ‘eradicating poverty, promoting democracy and good governance, resolving social conflict and protecting human rights’.²

It would not be a mistake to propose that today there is a strong and effective talk about and a global agenda for civil society, even about the evolving global civil society, and its role in the process of creating a better and ‘humane world’, in which the main intention is to reinvigorate and strengthen civil society politically, organizationally and normatively as a counter-hegemonic and resistance movement against the ‘state-centric world’ (Dower, 1998; Ehrenberg, 1999; Koh and Slye, 1999). It is however a mistake to attribute in an ipso facto manner ‘positivity’ to civil society, insofar as it involves not only democratic discourses, but also essentialist identity claims, voiced by religious and ethnic fundamentalism, and arguing for reconstructing the state–society/individual relations in a communitarian basis. In this sense, we should acknowledge that the global talk about civil society contains both ‘the use and the abuse of civil society’, and therefore that civil society is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for democracy (Keyman, 2000b).

It can be suggested here that Turkey, in this context, is not an exception: on the contrary, during the last decade, Turkish society has undergone rapid social/cultural, economic and political change. Moreover, as we will see, the sources of change are located in the global–national–local context, giving rise not only to the legitimacy crisis of the Turkish state and the emergence of the alternative claims to Turkish modernity, but also to the increasing ambivalence embedded in the process of Turkey’s integration into the European Union as a full member. One of the important sites where we observe clearly the process of change and its manifestations in Turkey is that of civil society, which has been growing since the 1980s, especially during the 1990s, in terms of its qualitative and quantitative importance for making Turkish society more liberal and democratic than before. Indeed, there are almost 3000 civil society organizations in Turkey today, whose activities involve a number of issues, ranging from human rights to democratization, from peace to environment, from issue-specific problems to even meta-societal visions such as Westernization, Atatürkism, nationalism, and Islamization. Quantitatively, civil society organizations have begun to play an important role in articulating and representing the various ideological interests and political demands voiced by different segments of society, as well as in transmitting to the political actors the societal calls for democratization and the need for effective governing. In this sense, we can suggest that the increasing role of civil society in Turkey especially during the 1990s has created ‘the relative autonomization of economic activities, societal groups and cultural identities’, which has given rise to ‘an autonomous societal sphere’ by realizing the shift in the focus of political practice ‘from the state to society’ (Göle, 1994).

It should be pointed out, however, that the emergence of ‘an autonomous societal sphere’ in Turkish politics as an outcome of the increasing activities and importance (at least in a normative sense) of civil society organizations should not be taken as a given positive development. Instead, while recognizing the importance of this development for democratization, we should also recognize the possibility of the use and the abuse of civil society, and therefore that we
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should analyze critically the actors of civil society in terms of their discourses and strategies. In other words, as we will elaborate in detail, we should recognize that the emergence of civil society involves not only the possibility of democratization, but also serious problems, insofar as it constitutes a ‘discursive space’ both for democratic forces and for religious and the ethnonationalist political strategies to voice their essentialist and anti-democratic identity claims. For this reason, we suggest that civil society in Turkey involves a serious ‘boundary problem’, since it functions not only as a necessary condition for democratization, but also as ‘an important site’ for the activities of anti-democratic forces to put their identity politics in practice.3

In order to substantiate this argument, we will first outline the internal and external factors that have paved the way to the emergence and the increasing importance of civil society in Turkey. Then, we will focus on the use and the abuse of civil society by looking at the discourses and the strategies of different civil society organization, in a way to delineate the way in which the boundary problem of civil society has occurred. This will allow us to suggest that the reason for the boundary problem is in fact historical, insofar as it is related to the larger problem of ‘citizenship’ in Turkey. For this reason, in the last section, we will attempt to provide a brief explanation of the (republican) citizenship regime in Turkey, which has played an important role in the transformation of civil society into a ‘site’ for the activities of political actors to exercise their identity-based political strategies. In conclusion, we will make a set of suggestions for the possibility of democratization in Turkey, for which, we still believe, civil society should be supported as a ‘necessary condition’.

Situating Civil Society in a Global-Historical Context

The historical context, in which identity politics has occurred and influenced Turkish social and political life, is not only national, but also global in nature. The emergence of civil society is also embedded in this global context. More particularly, it has been suggested that four distinct but nevertheless interrelated processes have dictated both the direction of Turkish modernization since the 1980s and the way in which civil society has become an important actor in Turkish politics.4 In this sense, these processes should be considered when analyzing the current state of Turkish politics, where the center-Right and center-Left political parties have continuously been declining in terms of their popular support and their ability to produce effective and convincing policies, while at the same time both the resurgence of identity politics and civil society have become strong and influential actors of social and political change.

The first process is ‘the changing meaning of modernity’, that is, ‘the emergence of alternative modernities’. Civil society organizations and intellectuals agree that since the 1980s, the process of Turkish modernization involved new actors, new mentalities of development and new identity claims. This means, first, the emergence of the critique of the status of the secular-rational thinking as the exclusive source of modernity in Turkey, and second, the increasing strength of Islamic discourse both as a ‘political actor’ and as a ‘symbolic foundation’ for identity formation. On the other hand, the alteration in
the meaning of modernity also manifested itself in the emergence of the language of civil society, civil rights, and democratization. Calls for the need to think of modernity in terms of democracy created a context for the upsurge of interest in civil society, citizenship, and the democratic self. Thus, since the 1980s, but especially in the 1990s and today, not only has the hegemony of the secular and state-centric nature of Turkish modernity been challenged by alternative claims to identity, politics and society, but also and more importantly, we have seen the increasing presence of new actors with different societal visions and political discourses in Turkish politics (Keyman, 2000b). In addition to Islamic discourse with its political parties, there have emerged important and politically active civil society organizations, calling for the need to democratize the secular and state-centric model of Turkish modernity by making it more liberal, more civil and more compatible with the language of ‘rights’. What marks the nature of Turkish politics today is the existence (or the emergence) of alternative claims to modernity in Turkish politics, carried out by new actors, new discourses and new strategies, all of which share the common suggestion that the secular and state-centric model of modernity is no longer able to govern society efficiently and democratically.

The second process is related to ‘the legitimacy crisis of the strong-state tradition’ in Turkey since the 1980s. Turkish modernization, since the beginning of the Republic, has been characterized by and has given rise to the ‘strong-state tradition’. This tradition means, first, that the state has assumed the capacity of acting almost completely independent from civil society; second, that the state, rather than the government, has constituted ‘the primary context of politics’; and third, that the state has played a significant role, been involved in the process of the production and reproduction of cultural life. The strong-state tradition has functioned as the organizing ‘internal variable’ of Turkish politics up until the 1980s. However, since the 1980s, the emergence of new actors, new mentalities and the new language of modernization, as well as democracy as a global point of reference in politics, has made culture and cultural factors an important variable in understanding political activities. Thus, the call for democratization as the main basis for the regulation of the state–society has become the global/local context for Turkish politics. This means that new actors acting at the global/local levels and calling for democratization have confronted the privileged role of state at the national level. In this sense, one of the important impacts of globalization on Turkish modernization has been, and still continues to be, the fact that the state has a legitimacy problem in maintaining its position as the primary context for politics, as a result of the shift towards civil society and culture as new reference points in the language and the terms of politics.

In order to understand these two processes, (1) the emergence of alternative modernities and (2) the legitimacy crisis of the strong-state tradition, we should also look at the changing structure of global relations in general, and the impact of the ‘process of Turkey’s integration into the European Union as a full member’ on the formation of Turkish modernization since the 1990s. We could refer to both ‘the process of European integration’ and ‘the process of globalization’ as those constraining factors that have had important short-term and long-term impacts on the interaction of politics, polity and policy in the 1990s.
in Turkish politics. While the process of European integration means the emergence of the democratic mode of regulation of the state–society relations in Turkey, the process of globalization amounts to the intensification of economic, political and cultural relations across borders, which makes it very difficult, if not impossible, to think of politics without situating it into the global–national–local context (Keyman, 1997).

In order to have a better understanding of the impact of the process of European integration on Turkish politics and modernization, it is necessary to briefly touch upon the membership affair of Turkey with the European Union. After the European Council Meeting in Helsinki on 10–11 December 1999, Turkey has been declared as an official candidate for full membership to the European Union (hereafter, the EU). This decision started a process of pre-accession including a transitional period of policy and legislation adoption and harmonization (Hale and Avci, 2001). The adoption and the implementation of the EU’s social, political and economic policies are imperative and the basic requirement for the candidate state to become a full member. It should be pointed out, however, that among these requirements, the adoption of the EU accquis communitaire is of utmost importance, insofar as its implementation inevitably results in the modification of existing domestic policies and practices in various Justice and Home Affairs (Kirisci, 2002). In this process, the issues of citizenship and civil society are vitally important to the European Commission and its members. The importance to these issues has been reflected in the Accession Partnership Document (APD)5 issued in 2000, in which the EU Commission identified its short- and medium-term priorities, intermediate objectives and conditions. These priorities and objectives are non-negotiable, in that they constituted the basic criterion for the acceptance (as well as of the rejection) of a candidate country, such as Turkey, into the EU as a full member. As often referred to the political aspects of the ‘Copenhagen criteria’, the membership requires that Turkey must achieve a strong democratic stability, which ensures that the state governs society in accordance with the principle of the primacy of the rule of law, the protection of human rights and the respect for the minority rights. The Copenhagen criteria serve as a basis for the further democratization of the state–society relations in a given candidate country such as Turkey.

Since December 1999, the considerable political attention has been given in Turkey to the necessary reforms to meet the political sides of the Copenhagen criteria. It is within this context that in 2001, the government created the ‘National Programme’,6 which was designed to elevate the structure and quality of Turkish democracy to the level of European democracy by creating a legal foundation for the full protection of the individual rights and freedoms, the freedom of thought and expression, the freedom of association and peaceful assembly, and the enlargement of the space of civil society in Turkey. In the last year, the government also made some revolutionary political, administrative, and judicial reforms in the areas of human rights, democracy and the rule of law: these changes were directly related both to the further democratization of the state in Turkey and to the reconstruction of the republican model of citizenship in a way to make it more democratic and liberal. These reforms involved the
abolishment of the death penalty, the elimination of the legal restrictions to the
rights of different ethnic communities both to education and to broadcasting in
their own mother tongues, and the granting and the non-Muslim religious
foundations the right to acquire property. These reforms, which were made in
accordance with the Copenhagen political criteria, are of utmost importance in
the creation of a strong language of rights in Turkey, which has a positive impact
on the democratization of the state and the enlargement of the space of civil
society. At the same time, it should be admitted that these reforms also indicate
that the sources of democratization in Turkey are no longer only national, but
also global, and therefore that the EU plays an important role in the changing
nature of the state–society relations in Turkey and functions as a powerful actor
generating system-transforming impacts on Turkish politics.

Likewise, the process of globalization, especially the increasing globalization
of markets and the growth of global communication, has yielded important
consequences for the political process in Turkey, as it acted as a structural
constraint on the economic policy options of the center-Right and center-Left
political parties. Actors commonly maintain that one of the impacts of globaliza-
tion on national politics is that it marks ‘the limits of politics’. As a result of
globalization, the differences that used to distinguish government policies
from opposition policies are in a process of disappearance. This manifests itself
e especially and more clearly in policies regarding national economic issues, such
as production, trade, and finance. Two important conclusions can be extrapolated
here. The first is that the policy options of political parties are limited by
globalization. Second, the globalizing world creates serious problems, which
require effective and rationally formulated policies. Political parties alone cannot
produce effective solutions to problems and issues, such as environmental
risks, multiculturalism, and poverty, whose existence is increasingly affected by
the very process of globalization. In this context, supranational actors and civil
society organizations have become and act as ‘actors of politics’ as much
as political actors. Turkish politics does not represent an exception:
it is embedded in this process and globalization functions as a significant
external variable for understanding the current state of the political process in
Turkey.

These four factors, the emergence of alternative modernities, the legitimacy
crisis of the strong-state tradition, the process of European integration and the
process of globalization, are all situated at the intersection of the global–
national–local context. They indicate that since 1980, Turkish society has been
subject to ‘significant change’, in which the process of globalization operates and
generates impacts on societal affairs. By creating the global/local nexus whereby
modernity is articulated by different discourses of self, identity and culture,
globalization has brought about the possibility of the existence of alternative
meanings attributed to modernity, that is, to the co-existence of different cultures
with different interpretations of modernity. Thus the formation of Turkish
modernization began to carry in it ‘alternative modernities’ with different
political discourses of, and different future prospects for, Turkish social life. It
is in this context, created by these four factors, that civil society has also become
an important factor in Turkish politics.
Globalization and Civil Society Organizations

As noted, since the 1980s, but especially during the 1990s, there has been an upsurge of interest in exploring alternative ways in which socio-political change in Turkey can be freed from the strong-state tradition. It is argued that socio-political change involves more actors taking place outside the ‘political center’, and thus produces a more ‘participatory political culture’. The sources of this interest are located not only in the general societal dissatisfaction with the strong-state tradition in Turkey, especially with respect to its increasing independence from society and its concomitant failure to respond to social and cultural demands and to cope with societal problems. The source for a more participatory culture was not only related to the general belief that the state has increasingly become unable to ‘cope with and manage effectively the changing nature of Turkish economic and cultural life’. It is argued that the sources were also ‘global’ in nature, insofar as they have coincided with the globalization of the interests and the activities of civil society organizations and non-governmental organizations. The emergence of what is called ‘global civil society’ has also provided both normative and institutional basis for the call for a more participatory culture in Turkey. In this sense, a reference to globalization in terms of its role in ‘the creation of the language of politics, which is not exclusively associated with the state’ constitutes a common denominator among civil society organizations.7

In other words, by creating a suitable platform for the ‘information society’, in which knowledge becomes as important as labor, and gets transmitted and disseminated throughout the world, cultural globalization makes politics and democracy more ‘transitional’ in terms of actors and strategies. Thus, civil society organizations find for themselves ‘a space to do politics’ between the failure of the nation-state and the transnationalization of politics and democracy, and attempt to include into the political agenda ‘the issue and the problem areas around which they organize’. Civil society organizations are political actors, but, unlike political parties, they focus on specific issue areas, such as human rights, environment, peace, and the rights concerning gender, sexuality, ethnicity and culture. In this sense, civil society organizations promote a discourse of politics, founded upon the ‘language of rights’ which involves the protection and the expression of civil rights that the process of democratization requires. They promote a kind of (national and transnational) political activity, which is democratic, non-hierarchical, and participatory, and is initiated ‘from the bottom up’. In this context, it is believed that the activities of civil society organizations have given rise to the process of the emergence of global civil society, which is sometimes characterized as a process of ‘globalization-from-below’.

In Turkey, the crisis of the strong-state tradition and the impacts of globalization have together contributed to the significant qualitative and quantitative increase in civil society organizations during the 1990s. Civil society organizations have been considered (a) an ‘indispensable element’ of the process of democratization; (b) a ‘necessary factor’ to create stability in the relations between Turkey and the European Union; and (c) an ‘important element’ of the
modernization and the liberalization of the Turkish state, so that it transforms itself into a political organization whose power and activities are ‘accountable’ to society. The discourse of civil society has been normatively supported and actively promoted in academic and public life in Turkey during the 1990s. Thus, civil society organizations have gained a ‘(political) actor-like quality’ with normative and discursive power, influencing us to rethink the state–society/individual relations beyond the strong-state tradition and by employing the globalization of the language of civil rights.

The tragic and devastating events of 1999 have also led us to think of civil society organizations seriously. The Marmara Earthquake on 17 August destroyed a large portion of the most industrial region of Turkey, causing almost 20,000 deaths and thereby creating one of the most tragic events of the century, and then there was the Düzce Earthquake on 12 November. These two disasters made it very clear to Turkish people that the strong state is in fact very weak in responding and coping with serious problems. This failure of the Turkish state to respond quickly to crisis situations has given rise to a common belief among people that civil society organizations and a more participatory political culture are necessary for the efficient and effective solution of the problems confronting Turkish society.

At the same time, the participation in research operations of several foreign search and rescue teams and the global outpouring of help to people who lost their families and homes, have created a point of articulation between globalization and civil society in Turkey. The large amount of financial and moral help coming from various societies, institutions and even individuals has created a significant shift in people’s attitudes and behavioral patterns from a more nationalistic view of the world to a more transnationalist and universalistic approach to social relations. The normative value of civil society organizations and their call for the global acceptance of the language of civil rights and the participatory democracy has increased immensely in Turkey.

Having accounted for the reasons for the increasing importance of civil society organizations in Turkey, and its ‘embeddedness’ in what is called ‘the global talk of civil society’, it should be pointed out, however, that paradoxically, most of the civil society organizations in Turkey, in fact, see globalization as ‘a process to be resisted in the long run’ or as ‘a problem to be seriously dealt with in order to make its impacts positive for Turkish society’. In other words, the general intellectual discourse of civil society, which sees globalization as one of the contributory factors for the development of civil society organizations in Turkey, does not correspond to the way in which civil society organizations themselves speak about the utility of globalization. In other words, civil society organizations appear to be ‘quite skeptical’ in the way in which they approach the question of the long-term impacts of cultural globalization. This skepticism sometimes operate in a strong fashion, to the extent that globalization is seen as nothing but a new form of imperialism creating undemocratic power relations in the world on behalf of rich countries. Sometimes, it takes the form of seeing globalization as an objective reality that produces both positive and negative impacts; positive in the sense of confronting the power of the strong state and creating a platform for the protection of civil rights, and negative in the
sense of supporting the liberal hegemonic vision of the world, based on free market ideology. On the other hand, the leaders of some civil society organizations, such as citizenship initiatives, environmental organizations and organizations that are directly dealing with the problems of urban life, think of cultural globalization positively as a process ‘internal’ to their activities.

For example, ‘Human Rights Organization’, which receives global support for its activities, takes the strong skeptic position on globalization, and argues that although they support the existing global discourse on the protection of human rights, globalization in the long run serves the interests of the economically powerful countries in the world. Thus, the organization thinks that in the long run it is necessary that globalization should be resisted, in order to create democratic global governance. The other human rights organization, associated with Islamic discourse (Mazlum-Der), presents a softer version of skepticism, and argues that globalization provides a platform suitable for its activities, although the liberal discourse of human rights it promotes is problematic in dealing with cultural rights. On the other hand, the third human right organization (Helsinki Vatandaslar Dernegi), which was founded in Europe and operates in Turkey, views cultural globalization as a problem simultaneously generating positive and negative impacts for both the nation-state and civil society. That is, globalization cannot be rejected nor celebrated, but should be dealt with seriously in order to take advantage of its positive qualities, such as its support for the universalization of the discourse of civil rights.

To point out the differences between these three human rights organizations is important, in the sense that they also illuminate a general problem that confronts civil society organizations in Turkey, and this problem determines, to a large extent, their approach to the question of globalization. This problem is the ‘boundary problem’; that is, to what extent civil society organizations in Turkey are in fact operating as a ‘civil society organization’ in terms of the scope and the content of their activities, their relation to the state, and their normative and ideological formations. The general definitional discourse on civil society in Turkey finds the institutional distinction between the state and society as a ‘sufficient condition’ for thinking of organizations taking place outside the boundaries of the state as civil society organizations. In fact, a large number of civil society organizations we have interviewed make use of this definition in describing themselves. However, this definition does not involve two important criteria, used in the literature to define civil society organizations, namely, that they are issue-specific organizations, and that they are not interested in creating or supporting ideological societal visions.

When we approach civil society organizations in Turkey on the basis of these two definitional criteria, we see that most of them act on the contrary, that is, their activities are not issue-based in scope and content; instead they are embedded in big societal visions. First of all, there are civil society organizations whose activities are framed, to a large extent, by big societal visions, such as, Kemalism, a modern Turkey, the protection of contemporary civilized life, the secular-democratic Turkey or Islamic order, Islamic life, a socialist Turkey, and Kemalist Woman, to name a few. Second, we see that while civil society organizations institutionally take place outside the state, they can have strong
normative and ideological ties with state power. An illustrative example of this was the process of closing the Welfare Party, where strong ties were established between some civil society organizations, the military and the state. In this case, we witnessed how the search for what is good for society at large could be a mission around which civil society organizations center their activities.

In sum, as far as the relationship between globalization and civil society, there is a difference between the intellectual discourse about civil society and the scope and the content of the activities of civil society organizations. Intellectual discourse locates civil society in a space that has occurred between the legitimacy and the governability problem of the strong-state tradition and the changing nature of societal relations partly because of the processes of globalization, and thus sees civil society as a necessary condition for democratization, pluralism and multiculturalism. However, most of the civil society organizations act on the contrary with their ideologically and normatively-loaded discourses and strategies. This is precisely because of the boundary problem by which most of the civil society organizations are confronted today. Even though their numbers are increasing and they are becoming important actors, how civil they are still remains uncertain. One of the crucial reasons for this boundary problem, as we will explain in detail in the following section, has to do with the ‘citizenship regime’ in Turkey, insofar as it is the republican model of citizenship that has constituted the ideological foundation for the actor-like quality of civil society and its identity formation. In other words, without analyzing critically and problematizing the republican model of citizenship in which civil society in Turkey is embedded, we cannot understand why most of the civil society organizations contain normatively-loaded discourses and strategies, rather than preferring to act as issue-specific organizations.

Civil Society and the Changing Notion of Citizenship in Turkey

A quick glance at the literature on civil society indicates that the activities of civil society manifest themselves in the relationship between state and citizenry. In other words, what makes the notion of civil society so integral to such a diverse array of state–society relations is its direct articulation to the notion of citizenship. In this sense, it is the question of citizenship that should be taken into account in the analysis of civil society, in order to account for the possibility of the use and the abuse of civil society. In this section we elaborate the basic defining characteristics of the established notion of Turkish citizenship as they are related to the issues of civil society and democracy in Turkey. However, we think that it is necessary pause here and redirect our attention briefly to the conceptual formation of citizenship, in order to have an analytical framework for an adequate analysis of the republican model of citizenship in Turkey.

Even though defining citizenship is itself a political activity and hence it means different things to different people (Blackburn, 1994), what is often very common to these varying definitions is related to the three dimensions that citizenship involves: status, identity, and activity (Kymlicka and Norman, 2000). A person’s citizenship status is defined largely by a discourse of the legal rights and duties that actually operate between citizens and the state. A person’s
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citizenship identity is represented by membership in one or more political communities which are often compared with other more particular identities based on race, ethnicity, religion, class, gender, and so on. Finally, a person’s citizenship activity (virtue) is seen essential for a responsible citizenship which requires some ‘social capital’ such as the ability to trust, the willingness to participate, or the sense of justice. Although the nature and dynamics of civil society in any given country is directly conditioned by each of these three constituting elements of citizenship, among them the aspects of status and activity are the main elements which link the citizenry to civil society.

Central to the status aspect of citizenship is the notion of ‘citizenship rights’. Historically and broadly speaking, and with reference to its Western experience since the eighteenth century, we can suggest that firstly the establishment of civil rights, second, that of the political rights, and then finally, that of the social and economic rights; all have directly contributed to the development of civil society. As Marshall (1965) described them, these three different types of rights are considered as the main elements of our modern citizenship. The civil rights are ‘necessary for individual freedom, such as liberty of the person, freedom of speech, thought and faith, the right to own property and to conclude valid contacts, and the right to justice’. The political rights are related to participation ‘in exercise of political power, as a member of a body of invested with political authority or as an elector of the members of such body’. The social and economic rights refer to ‘the whole range from the right to a modicum of economic welfare and security to the right to share to the full in the social heritage and to live the life of a civilized being according to the standards prevailing in the society’.

There is no room for doubt that the virtue side of citizenship is extremely important and determining factor in the formation of civil society. As elaborated by Galston (1991), there are four types of civic virtues which are essentials not only for a well functioning modern citizenship but also for a flourishing civil society. These are regarded as the general virtues (courage, law-abidingness, loyalty), the social virtues (independence, open-mindedness), the economic virtues (work ethic, capacity to delay self-gratification, adaptability to economic and technological change), and the political virtues (capacity to discern and respect the rights of others, willingness to demand only what can be paid for, ability to evaluate the performance of those in office, willingness to engage in public discourse). What is important here is the social fact that how a citizenship regime treats its status and virtue aspects is in fact a reflection of its commitment to civil society. This fact also indicates that through its understanding of civil, political, social and economic rights, as well as its approach to the general, social, economic, and political virtues, a state is able to define the sort of civil society it projects. In other words, a state may use its citizenship regime to define the borders and the boundaries of its civil society.

If we return to the question of civil society in Turkey, and analyze it from this theoretical-analytical framework, it becomes clear that the changing nature of civil society goes hand in hand with the changing dynamics of the citizenship in the country. Since its establishment the Turkish Republic has been guided by a series of rationales that view citizenship as serving goals and practices of a
universal kind reflected in Western political and philosophical tradition (Icduygu et al., 1999). In these rationales, a civic-republican understanding has been prevalent in the formation of Turkish citizenship (Soyarik, 2000). The emphasis has been on duty rather than right, and citizenship is considered to be a social practice rather than status. As we argued elsewhere (Keyman and Icduygu, 2003), this gives us the picture of the principle of ‘militant/virtues citizenship’, in which the national-secular identity is assumed to act in accordance with the organic vision of society, that is, as a citizen-subject who is willing to defer his/her rights until the point where he or she finishes his/her duties to the state, even though he or she knows that that point will never come. In this sense, the citizen is militantly active in the process of serving for the making of modern Turkey, and is virtuous in his/her will to put the public good before individual interest, his/her service for society before individual freedom, his/her national identity before difference, and his/her acceptance of cultural homogeneity before pluralism. However, it should be pointed out that the militant citizen is only active in terms of its duties to the state, but passive with respect to its will to carry the language of rights against state power.

As the Kemalist Republican ideology has tried to carefully construct the modern concept of citizenship with its own peculiar characteristics, there have not been many occasions in which the particular notion of citizenship is questioned and challenged. The Turkish citizenship has received renewed interest in the last 10 years, in a time when we have also observed the impacts of globalization on Turkish society. This coincidence is often interpreted empirically in the following way: ‘as the implications of the idea of globalization are assessed particularly in terms of the possibilities for the governance of the international system’ (Thompson, 1999) but not of the separate national entities, the conventional conception of Turkish citizenship (as a national identity and/or activity) can no longer play its unifying function, nor is it capable of translating abstract status to concrete rights. It is argued, in this context, that in a globalizing world the Turkish state is no longer able to operate and maintain its citizenship policies and practices as a result of both external factors (international migrations) and internal affairs (ethnic and religious revivals) (Icduygu and Keyman, 2000).

Of course, both ‘international migrations’ and ‘ethnic and religious revivals’ are not new phenomena. Nor are they the developments specific to the global era. But they are embedded in the process of globalization and generate important impacts on the notion of citizenship in two related ways: as directly puzzling the established notion of citizenship and as deeply contributing to the flourishing civil society. In the case of the former, as noted by Kastoryano (2000), international migration leads to an institutional expression of multiple citizenship, where the country of origin becomes a source of identity, the country of residence a source of status, and the emerging transnational space, a space of virtues combining the two or even more countries. Related to this argument, and in the case of the latter, it is suggested that contemporary international migration introduces a new mode of participation in public life both on national and international levels, and consequently ‘reflects the internationalization of civil society’ (Pellerin, 1996). Of course, here debating the international migration
and citizenship issues does not only directly refers to the core debates of the politics of identity/difference under the concept of citizenship. But it practically relates the migration-based debate to the debate on identity politics.

For instance, there is clear evidence that the emigration of Turkish citizens itself has contributed to the revival of Kurdish nationalism and political Islam in the context of a diaspora formation (Sayari, 1986; Abadan-Unat, 1997). On the other hand, as noted before, the 1990s have witnessed the fact that the previously excluded peripheral identities began to question the fabricated and imposed monolithic republican citizenship in Turkey. Thus, civil society has become a site where identity-based diversity conflicts took place, and involve actors ranging from democratic forces to non-democratic communitarian political discourses. An outcome of this process has been the enlargement of civil society, but not necessarily conducive to democratization. With this background, one can conclude that the evolving nature of civil society in Turkey are very much conditioned by the country’s internal dynamics, or inside, and its external relations, or outside. It is, therefore, very obvious that one should capture the developments in civil society in the context of global restructuring. In other words, one could not easily understand ‘the relationship of the state to its civil society with no or minimal recognition of the existence of other states’ (Taylor, 1996) and that of globalization.

**Conclusion: The Possibility of Democracy in Turkey**

If we can make a distinction between ‘globalization from above’ and ‘globalization from below’ (Falk, 1993), we could argue that civil society in late-modern times has the potential to play an important role for the possibility of democratic governance, by providing a space of deliberation for societal forces to transfer their interests and demands to political society. In this sense, as an area of political activity ‘from below’, civil society constitutes a necessary condition for democratizing the state-centric world. This role has to be supported both politically and normatively, not only in terms of global politics, but also with respect to national and local political units.

The positive role of civil society in the process of democratization concerns also the question of citizenship, since it contributes to the emergence of the crisis of the republican model of citizenship in Turkey, as well as its enlargement to the extent of including identity claims. In this sense, as a site of politics from below, civil society creates pluralism in a society, which has been constructed discursively as organic and nationally homogenous. In this chapter, we have argued that this quality of civil society has to be supported, but with an important reservation that there is no causal link between pluralism and democracy. As we have demonstrated, pluralism can also be articulated by religious and ethnic fundamentalism, which denounces democracy from the outset. This means that civil society as a space of pluralism can easily be simultaneously ‘used’ and ‘abused’ by fundamentalist discourses to strengthen their communitarian visions of society. These discourses have used civil society in their challenge to the republican model of citizenship in the name of pluralism, and at the same time abuse it by rendering it a functional means by which to realize
their own communitarian strategies to become a hegemonic vision of Turkish society.

In this context, we have suggested that civil society should not be approached as a self-glorified phenomenon of late modernity. Instead, we have to view it from a critical point of view, as a necessary condition for democratization, and attempt to find ways of transforming it into a space of ‘democratic deliberation’. The first step for this transformation is to situate civil society in a global-historical context in a way to approach it critically. To do so, we believe, has the potential to create a suitable methodological starting point to search for the possibility of building a ‘democratic consensus’ between state and civil society, identity and difference, and the self and the other. And it is in this attempt that the possibility of democracy in Turkey lies.

Notes

1. For details, see Beck (1998).
2. For an extensive survey of the activities of civil society organizations in the areas related to the human condition, see CIVICUS (1999).
3. It should be pointed out that this argument is not only a theoretical argument but also a thematic and empirical argument which we have extrapolated from our research on civil society organizations in Turkey, which was based upon in-depth interviews with the leaders of various effective civil society organizations, and a comprehensive reading of their publications. This research, which also included economic actors and popular culture, will be published as: Özbudun, E. and Keyman, E.F. (2002) ‘Cultural globalization in Turkey’, in: P.L. Berger and S.P. Huntington (Eds), Many Globalizations (Oxford, Oxford University Press), pp. 296–321.
4. This section is in fact the documentation of the in-depth interviews E.F. Keyman has done with the leaders of a number of important and effective civil society organizations in Turkey. For more detail, see Özbudun and Keyman (2002), pp. 312–16.
5. This document can be seen at <http://www.deltur.cec.eu.int>.
6. This document can be accessed at <http://www.abgs.gov.tr>.
7. See the following documentary sources, all of which have been published by the Turkish History Foundation in Istanbul, namely, as Civil Society Organizations in Turkey (1998), Civil Society Organizations in Istanbul (1998), and The Effective and Primary Civil Society Organizations (1998).

References