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Social Mobility and its Discontents: The Center-Periphery Cleavage of Turkey[i]

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Abstract

This study analyzes effects of the center-periphery cleavage on the relationship between state and religion in Turkey during the period of 2002 and 2012. The confrontation between center and periphery is one of the most important social cleavages underlying Turkish politics that has lasted since the late Ottoman period. This study suggests that the social cleavages between the center and the periphery are still prominent factors shaping discussions on the state's interaction with religion. That the periphery has gained more social capital since the 1980s has fueled these discussions. In recent years, the Republican People's Party, the armed forces, and the higher judiciary have represented the centrist coalition, while the Justice and Development Party has established itself as the main representative of the periphery. During this period, the previous elites have lost more power on the state level, a development that can be read as the conservative periphery displacing the secular center to some extent.

Introduction

Since coming to power in 2002, Turkey's ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) has been in heated debates because of their leaders' Islamic roots. Issues include the following: the wearing of headscarves by the wives of Prime Minister Erdogan and President Gul; the attempt to allow students to wear headscarves in universities; the attempt to allow Imam-Hatip school graduates to be considered for entrance to universities on an equal basis with other students; the enactment of a "zero problem" approach with Turkey's neighboring countries—Iraq, Iran, and Syria—and an increasing relationship with Middle Eastern countries instead of European countries. All of these are interpreted, especially by opposition parties and other secularist groups, as an axis shift in Turkish policy, which leads Islamization of Turkey.

I argue for further examination of the conflict between the AKP on one side and the secularists/Kemalists on the other as a power struggle among socio-economic classes. Together with the military, some other secular institutions, such as the judiciary and the universities, which make up a powerful elite class, do not want to lose their power against the newly emerging middle-class. The class-related nature of this conflict in Turkey has not penetrated Turkish politics after the AKP rule; but instead this conflict, namely the center-periphery cleavage, has its roots since the late Ottomans.

Background

State/religion relations can be combined into different categories of secular state and religious state. In the first option, state and religion are separate. This separation might be hostile/assertive or cooperative/passive/friendly. In the case of a religious state, a state has an official religion; nevertheless, this religion might or might not shape the legislature and the judiciary. In any case, all these categories mostly refer to constitutional claims rather than to social realities. For instance, Turkey is a secular country as explicitly stated in her Constitution. In mutual agreement, everybody defines the secular identity of Turkey in the Constitution as the separation of religion and the state. However, there is no agreement on how to implement this separation. Indeed, every

state has similar discussions on the implementation of the separation of religion and the state.

The principle that "Turkey is a secular state" entered the Turkish Constitution in 1937. However, the state has never held interfering in religious affairs. Since its establishment, Turkey has aimed to control religion through its national institution, the Department of Religious Affairs, and through school curricula. In the early years of the Republic, the state elite considered Islam a sign of backwardness. They eroded evidence of it in the state apparatus. However, the religion continued to live on public level as well as a private one. Repression of religion during the period of one-party rule was harsh indeed. However, this repression partly relieved after the transition to a multi-party system in 1950 as long as religion stayed in its place and did not interfere in state business.

After the establishment of the multi-party system, parties were forced to compete for power, and Islam became an important factor in attracting votes. The pious rural periphery, which had largely been excluded from politics since the foundation of the republic in 1923, now became an important political constituency whose interests had to be taken into consideration by conservative political parties (Rabasa and Larrabee 2008: 35).

Before the multi-party system, it was easy to ignore public demands on religion. In this time period, the imam-hatip schools and theology faculties were closed, and teaching religion was removed from all education levels. This negative stance cost the then-ruling Republican People's Party (CHP) to lose power in the first free elections in 1950 and in consecutive elections. After the ascension to power of the Democrat Party (DP) in 1950, the Turkish state became more tolerant of public requests for religious rights. Imam-hatip schools were re-opened, and elective religion courses returned to the public schools, where they met with strong public support. Many devout families, especially in the villages, were wary of the state-run secular education system because of the state's negative attitude to religion. The reintroduction of religious education in the schools convinced these families to send their children, particularly their daughters, to school. In addition, the imam-hatip schools increased their schooling of girls.

Children of conservative families continued their education in universities. This helped them enter state institutions. In addition, after the 1980s, the Turkish state left

state-centered economic politics and embraced more liberal economic programs. This helped the formation of a new middle class in Anatolia. Wealth and education were the two important components that helped transform Islamic groups since the 1980s. It was not easy to realize this transformation in the early years until the emergence of the AKP. If Turkey had not had an AKP government experience, today it would still be hard to prove this transformation. For instance, in the early 2000s, when Recep Tayyip Erdogan said he had removed his Islamic National View shirt, this statement met with suspicion. For years, Erdogan and his AKP were accused of having a hidden agenda, since most people did not believe in this transformation.

Other such signs were misinterpreted also. For instance, the schooling of female children was another sign of this change. It represented a change among conservative families on the issues of co-education, women working, and traditional roles that limited females to being housewives. In contrast, the secular side misinterpreted the visibility of headscarves in schools as a clear sign of Islamization of public education.

The headscarf issue became the most discussed issue in the state/religion interaction, since it was the most visible one. All discussions related to religion went through the headscarf. The secular elite who ran the state at the time strictly enforced a ban on wearing headscarves in universities and public institutions. They saw the imam-hatip schools and Quran-based courses as the sources of this problem. The middle-level sections of the imam-hatip schools were closed. Attending high school section was discouraged by the unfair university entrance exams, which gave a lower score to imam-hatip school (IHL) graduates. Legal and non-legal Quran-based courses or any other programs of religious groups were prosecuted. Even attending a legal Quran-based course during the summer was prohibited before completing fifth grade. Attending such courses during the school year was prohibited before completing the eighth grade. All these started after the military pressure on the Necmettin Erbakan government and the Welfare Party (RP) during a National Security Council (MGK) meeting on February 28, 1997. Since then this course of action was named *the February 28 process*.

Implementations of this process continued strictly until 2002. In that time period, the military insisted that the February 28 process would continue for a thousand years. Even optimists were not expecting an early resolution between religion and the state. In that environment, the Constitutional Court disbanded the Welfare Party (RP) in 1998 and

its successor, the Virtue Party (FP), in 2001. These two parties were representing the National View (MG) movement of Erbakan. After the dissolution of the FP in 2001, the movement split. The traditionalists established the Felicity Party (SP), with Erbakan exerting leadership behind the scenes. The modernists founded a new party, the Justice and Development Party (AKP), with Erdogan as party leader. In that way, the Constitutional Court unintentionally assisted in the emergence of the AKP. In the meantime, the 2001 economic crisis brought political instability in its wake. In that environment, the AKP, just one year after its establishment, won the election in 2002. Economic instability, the corruption of state officials, the embezzlement of state resources, and widespread poverty destroyed the trust of voters in the then-ruling party. In this economic and political atmosphere, the charismatic leadership of Erdogan helped the AKP to come to power.

The effects of the February 28 process continued in the early years of the AKP government. All other state apparatuses gradually lost their power vis-à-vis that government. In the early years, the tension between the AKP and the secular establishment was high. This tension can be explained not only by the negative attitude of secularists toward religion, but also by a power struggle, in which the AKP represented entrance into the national government and an upper-class lifestyle by the middle class. This was not welcomed by previous elites.

Discussions

The center-periphery cleavages framework, adopted by two prominent Turkish sociologists, Serif Mardin and Nilufer Gole, proves useful in understanding the changing patterns of polarization and conflict resolution during the early years of the AKP government.

Serif Mardin argues that, "until recently, the confrontation between center and periphery was the most important social cleavage underlying Turkish politics that seems to have survived more than a century of modernization" (Mardin 2006 [1973]: 299). He explains how this social cleavage has lasted since the late Ottoman period by examining economical and educational opportunities. According to him, the political elite benefited

from state resources, since the state established tight control over the economy. In addition, some families with a history of service to the state continued to hold a privileged position. Finally, the restriction of educational opportunities has deepened this social cleavage.

During the late Ottoman period, modern educational institutions perpetuated the pre-modern cultural cleavage between the center and the periphery. While the children of families who were part of the bureaucracy more readily benefited from the modern sector of education, the great majority of the periphery was unable or unwilling to send their children to modern schools (Mardin 2006 [1973]: 307). Thus people on the periphery benefited only from religious education, with the result that religion became the border between the center and the periphery (Mardin, p. 301). During later phases of modernization, mostly implemented as Westernization, the cultural alienation of the masses from the rulers, of the periphery from the center, became apparent (p. 304). Although Sultan Abdulhamid II (r. 1876-1909) tried to integrate the periphery under the banner of pan-Islamism for the sake of the state, he only partly succeeded in creating a true national unification (p. 305). The succeeding rulers of the Ottoman State did not continue his moves toward unification under the Islamic banner, but preferred to endorse secular nationalism. The modernization of cultural life increased the cultural gap between the center and the periphery, as the center showed an inability to integrate the periphery into this new cultural framework (pp. 307-308).

In the early years of the Republic, the Kemalist ideology presented a top-down social engineering project that failed to provide for social mobilization in a form that would bring a greater portion of the masses into meaningful relation with the center (Mardin, pp. 312-314). As a result, the Republican People's Party (CHP, 1923-1950) represented the "bureaucratic" center, whereas the Democrat Party (DP, 1950-1960) represented the "democratic" periphery in Turkish political life. The coup d'état against the democratically elected Democrat Party in 1960 underlined this cleavage: whereas the center represented the preservation of the static order, the periphery represented social mobility (p. 314). The 1960 Constitution legitimized the bureaucracy and the intellectuals as a source of sovereignty in addition to the Turkish people as a whole. The 1971 intervention of the military was another expression of the desire for a return to the rigidity of the old order (Mardin 2006 [1973]). Since Mardin's article was published in 1973, he did not evaluate the changes subsequent to that date. However, the postmodern

military intervention in 1997; the emergence of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) in the 2000s with high popular support, mostly by the middle class; and finally, the AKP government's clash with the secular establishment, the bureaucracy, and other ruling elite – including but not limited to the military and the judiciary – suggest that Serif Mardin's center-periphery thesis remains valid in Turkey.

Recent literature in Turkey also acknowledges the center-periphery dichotomy in Turkish politics that has become apparent during the rule of the AKP since 2002 (see Bayramoglu 2006; Carkoglu 2007 and 2008; Ozbudun 2012; Onis 2013; Heper 2013). In the early 2000s, the movement of the periphery towards the center of society produced tensions and polarization. As the level of cohabitation increased, so did the intensity of conflict. Increasing direct and indirect contact of the secular segment with the Islamic segment or its actors intensified this conflict (Bayramoglu 2006).

On the other hand, some components of the center-periphery cleavage have changed since Mardin's article. The 2000s center-periphery cleavage is different from that of the 1950s, which Serif Mardin described. In the previous cleavage, cultural, educational, religious, and economic differences were profound. However, the current movement of the periphery is represented by the middle class AKP constituency that shares more views with the center on issues such as democracy, freedom, and human rights (see Bayramoglu 2006: 145; Kubicek 2009). Cultural and educational gaps have closed during the last two decades between secular and conservative segments, especially for the younger generation. Religion has maintained its importance in this cleavage. However, new definitions and the implementation of secularism on the state level have helped limit the influence of religion in this cleavage. State/religion relations have significantly shifted in the direction of passive secularism. This moderation has helped provide a political foundation for coping with the deepening polarization within Turkish society (see Warhola and Bezci 2010: 453; Kuru 2013).

Another prominent Turkish sociologist, Nilufer Gole, also investigates center-periphery cleavages in Turkey in her work (Gole 1997). She argues that, since the late Ottoman period and that of the early Republic, the Turkish elite, which owed its existence and power to the Republic, embraced French Jacobinism, which represented a highly centralized model of change by top-down reformism, secularism, and nationalism, rather than Anglo-Saxon liberalism, as a model of change. Hence secularization became a part

of social engineering rather than an outcome of societal development (p. 48). Shifting from an Islamic to a Western culture created cultural distinctions and social stratifications in Turkish society. Gole uses Pierre Bourdieu's terms "symbolic capital" and "habitus" to emphasize stratification on the cultural level, rather than the concept of "social class" that emphasizes economic power. Accordingly, cultural codes and life-styles are not a trivial matter of fashion and individual choices but, rather, reflect complex relations of inter-subjectivity, stratification, and power. Educational opportunities came to demarcate these cultural differences, once the central urban middle and upper-middle classes accessed education, meanwhile groups at the periphery lacked comparable opportunities for decades. This cultural gap between the elite of the center and the people of the periphery has become a prominent feature in Turkish society and politics (p. 52). From the 1950s on, especially after 1983, peripheral groups moved into urban centers where they accessed secular education and found opportunities for upward social mobility. According to Gole (1997: 54-55),

> these new agents of change represented the move of Islam from the periphery of the system to its center, and yet were themselves a product of that center, of its educational institutions and its urban life. As these new agents of Islamism began to obtain the same cultural capital as the Republican elites, share the same university classes, occupy the ranks of parliament, and participate in public debates on television, they started to gain public visibility, social recognition, legitimacy, and prestige. The Republican secular elites, in turn, reacted primarily in political terms, and began to wage a battle against Islamic fundamentalism and in defense of secularism.

Hence, Kemalists/secularists have seen religion as a threat for their power and have interpreted all demands for greater religious freedom as an attack on secularism and on the Republic itself. Simmel explains the upper classes' resistance to change with their fear of loosing their privileges;

> The upper classes, however, were most intensely affected and transformed by new influences, just as the upper branches of a tree are most responsive to the movements of the air. The highest classes, as everyone knows, are the most conservative, and frequently enough they are even archaic. They

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dread every motion and change, not because they have an antipathy for the contents or because the latter are injurious to them, but simply because it is change and because they regard every modification of the whole, as suspicious and dangerous. No change can bring them additional power, and every change can give them something to fear, but nothing to hope for (Simmel 1957: 555).

The upper classes had a fear of loosing their power in the state. This power included both administrative power in the state and economical power by exploiting state opportunities and facilities. Incentive funds of the state would not be available to only a few particular groups anymore. Taking advantage of state funds is ending and those state funds should be shared with new incoming conservatives. As a result, the secular groups perceive the expression of religious interests through religious organizations or political parties as alarming, rather than as a natural outcome of electoral politics or democratic rights (Toprak 1981: 3). Therefore, religion itself has not led to the disproportionate impact of fragmentation on Turkish politics; but instead, it is the perceived threat of religion to Kemalist secularism that has been responsible for religion's politicization (Toprak 1981: 123).

As expressed by Serif Mardin earlier, previous social mobilization attempts from the periphery to the center failed because of the 1960 and 1971 military interventions, which represented the hostility of the central bureaucratic and secular establishment toward this type of social mobilization (see Mardin 2006 [1973]: 314). According to Gole, peripheral groups found more opportunities to access this type of social mobilization after 1983. At this time, P.M. Turgut Ozal (P.M. 1983-91) introduced a liberal market economy and the privatization of the mass media. As a consequence, civil society has expanded and non-governmental organizations have proliferated. These developments were surrounded by lively public debate on issues of religious and ethnic identity, national unity, secularism, and democratic pluralism (Gole 1997: 47).

This grace period was interrupted by another military intervention in 1997. In this involvement, the military did not seize power but used other state bureaucracy, the judiciary, business associations, and media groups to push the Islamist Welfare Party (RP)'s government (1996-1997) to resign. Observers among Turkish journalists coined the phrase "post-modern coup" to describe these developments (Turker Alkan, 13 June

1997, *Radikal;* and Cengiz Candar, 28 June 1997, *Sabah*). The conflict between the secularist center and the conservative periphery became more visible during this intervention. State pressure on religious organizations was definitely harsh during the following years. The AKP government came to power in 2002 when this pressure was still at its peak. Thus the time period 2002-2012 witnessed a constant struggle between the secular center and the conservative periphery. In this struggle, the Republican People's Party (CHP), the armed forces, and the higher judiciary have represented the centrist coalition, while the AKP has established itself as the main representative of the periphery (Ozbudun 2012: 48). In the center-periphery cleavages, both Turgut Ozal (1983-1993) and Recep Tayyip Erdogan (since 2002) have managed to move the periphery toward the center, to the point where the periphery has gradually begun to play a major role in the Turkish economy and polity (Heper 2013: 154).

In positing social cleavages along with Turkish secularism, this study suggests that the social cleavages between the center and the periphery are still prominent factors shaping discussions on the state's interaction with religion. That the periphery has gained more social capital since the 1980s has fueled these discussions. In addition, acquisition of political power by the conservative AKP has helped the conservative periphery to raise its voice against the secular bureaucracy and the elites. While the AKP held more power following every election, the previous elites have lost more power on the state level, a development that can be read as the conservative periphery displacing the secular center to some extent.

In the early conflicts, by representing the secular establishment, the secular state institutions confronted the AKP government. In most cases, the AKP had to step back. Since these state institutions gradually lost power vis-à-vis the AKP government, secular opposition groups have felt they were being totally excluded from the center.

Examining practices on state-taught religion and religious education may give us some clues about this center-periphery tension. The AKP's early attempts at solving problems of religious education elicited strict opposition among the centrist coalition, including the military, the higher judiciary, the universities, the Higher Education Board (YOK), the presidency, the secularist opposition parties, the media, and business associations. The Constitutional Court almost dissolved the party in 2008 because of its endeavors related to religious education. In the following years, the negative stance of the

state institutions regarding religious education diminished. In this change, the AKP government was the leading factor, since it won three consecutive elections in 2002, 2007, and 2011. The AKP's then-Foreign Affairs Minister Abdullah Gul won the Presidency in 2007. Before Gul's presidency, the AKP government had almost no influence with the above-mentioned opposition groups with regard to religious education. President Gul's appointments of higher officials have begun to change this, as can be seen with regard to the presidents of universities, members of the Higher Education Board (YOK), and members of the higher courts. The 2010 Constitutional amendments, which passed by public vote, increased the party's influence on the judiciary. Secularist business associations and media groups have decreased their previous strict opposition, since the AKP has won three consecutive elections and proved that it will hold the power for a long time.

Furthermore, in Turkey, the state is the biggest employer of businessmen. For this reason, it was hard for business associations and media groups to maintain a strict opposition to the AKP government. Indeed, the governmental pressure on business associations and media groups raised concerns about authoritarianism. In these discussions, the AKP government brought forward its electoral success, while opposition groups urged that democracy is not only evident in the ballot box. Even though these discussions seemed to become more prominent during the second and third terms of the AKP government, they were actually a factor in politics since the first day of the AKP regime.

The widespread summer 2013 public protests against the AKP government were an expression of this disappointment. The opposition groups could not find any institutional platform to raise their voices against the AKP government in its third term (2011-). Public protests became a way to express feelings of these groups, but since they lacked sufficient institutional support in Turkey, they looked at international institutions. Paying full-page advertisements against the AKP government on *The New York Times* and *The Times* suggest that these opponents wanted to cover lack of the Turkish institutional support by seeking support on international level to force the AKP government for their demands. In this case, the issue is not so much the AKP government's authoritarianism, but the need for other political parties to adjust to the new political environment. Exclusion of the secular opposition groups from power might be interpreted as a reversal of the previous center-periphery cleavage, but it is still too early

to reach such a conclusion. The center-periphery cleavage relates not only to political power but also to the cultural and economic superiority of the center. During the AKP government, the lower and middle classes have found a way to achieve some social mobility in the direction of an upper-class lifestyle; however, this does not mean that the previous elites have lost their economic advantages. This is evident from the economic profile of some supporters of the protestors, who participated the 2013 summer anti-government demonstrations. According to a survey on the 2013 protests, which surveyed the members of the CEO Club, an organization has more than 500 CEOs in Turkey, nearly half, 48 percent, of the 137 CEO's in Turkey who participated the study expressed that they had visited the Gezi Park where the protests occurred to support them (*Hurriyet Daily News* 06/18/2013). While the Turkish economy has grown significantly under AKP rule, the previous elites, who held the most economic capital, have benefited from it more than other economic classes. That is why it is difficult to claim that the periphery replaced the center during that time period.

Among all state institutions, the AKP has less influence, however, on the military. Since the military has strict rules in the choosing of personnel and advancing them to high-ranking positions, it is still adhering to its secularist ideology. However, the opposition of the military has also diminished for two reasons. In the first instance, the General Staff published a notice against the AKP government in the 2007 Presidential elections. This warning was named *e-memorandum*, since it was published on the army's official website. However, this e-memorandum did not find the expected public support. In fact, it caused a negative reaction against the military's interference in politics and helped the AKP government increase its votes in the following elections. The military learned from this experience that it should keep its voice in balance. The second instance was the arrest of hundreds of military personnel since 2008 on the ground that they had been planning a coup against the democratically elected AKP government in its early years. These arrests seriously diminished the military resistance to the AKP's religion-related politics.

When there was no longer any state institution that stood firmly against political changes related to religious education, in late 2011 the YOK eliminated the unfair procedures regarding the entrance of IHL graduates to universities, and a few months later, in 2012, the AKP government reopened the middle-level sections of the IHLs. The AKP removed restrictions on Quran-based courses in the same year as well.

With regard to the public response to these changes, it can be said that the majority welcomed them. In the early years of the AKP government, reactions of secularists regarding the proposed changes were harsh indeed, but they faded in time. These reactions were not only related to AKP policies, but also reflected the power struggle between the center and the periphery. As regards the majority, the electoral success of the AKP can be interpreted as a sign of their support. In addition, increasing registration in IHLs and enrollment in elective religious courses are other signs of the public support for these changes. One might ask why the centrist secular establishment has remained so strictly opposed to the provision of a simple vocational imam-hatip high-school education. It turns out that the imam-hatip schools did not serve to extend the previous social system, in which the upper class continued to enjoy its privileges, but quite the opposite that they helped lower-class religious families to enter the state apparatus. As an imam-hatip graduate, Recep Tayyip Erdogan became the prime minister of Turkey, thereby confirming the fears of the elites.

Overall, the Turkish state has never left religion alone even in its most secular phases. Even though this relationship has experienced constant changes, there was never a complete separation of religion and the state. The time period examined, 2002-2012, witnessed what might be called a "normalization" of the state/religion relationship: religion is no longer seen to be a threat to the state, and neither is the state seen as a threat to religion.

However, this normalization was not an easy process and should not be taken for granted. Its development has taken almost a century and is still a working process, in which both the center and the periphery have moved a long way toward reshaping their ideologies, especially regarding secularism. In the early years of the Republic, the center, characterized by the Kemalist ideology, presented a top-down social engineering project that failed to provide upward social mobility. Assertive secularism became an inseparable part of this ideology. The transition to free elections and a multiparty system brought new opportunities for members of the periphery to increase their voices. The Democrat Party (DP, 1950-1960) became the first party that represented the periphery in politics. In that time period, the social cleavage was carried into political life. The 1960 and 1971 military interventions were a way for the centrist groups to return to the previous strict social cleavage in politics. The following years also did not bring much opportunity for interaction between the center and the periphery until the 1980s. At that time, Turgut

Ozal (1983-1993) introduced a liberal market economy and created more opportunities for the periphery for social mobility toward the center. Wealth and education became two important components that have helped transform Islamic groups since the 1980s. The center did not realize this transformation at first and misinterpreted its early signs, as we saw in examples of its attitudes toward the issues of headscarves and the imam-hatip schools.

The Justice and Development Party (AKP) was both a result of this Islamic transformation and its accelerator. In that way, the AKP represents the *normalization of Islamic groups'* attitudes in opposition to the secular state. This normalization also suggests a change of Islamic ideology in politics. It proves that, when Islamists are allowed to participate in democratic political life, they do not necessarily temper it but may become a part of it. This brings a new breadth to democracy under the name of traditional conservatism that is becoming acceptable to a larger public, which suggests a pragmatic model for other Islamic countries. On the other hand, the AKP caused the state to reduce its assertive secularist policies in a way that can be termed the *normalization of secular ideology*. The Turkish state had implemented a strict secularism since the beginning of the Republic while the AKP government has embraced a friendly secularism since 2002. This transition provided normalization vis-à-vis state and religion relations.

None of these processes was easy. They have shown a constant struggle between the AKP and the secular establishment, in which both sides have learned the limits and possibilities of each other. This development has helped bring about a mutual transformation and a moving away from the parties' prior static propositions. The 2013 anti-government protests may be seen contradict to my *normalization* thesis but they did not. During the first and second terms of the AKP government, secular groups had expressed their discomfort by talking about neighborhood pressure, which suggests that these groups feel social pressure for their secular lifestyle. In the third term of the AKP government, propositions about neighborhood pressure were replaced by allegations about the AKP authoritarianism. In previous years, religion was the base of arguments while the 2013 anti-government protests did not base their arguments solely on religious discourses. This discourse shift supports my argument on normalization of secular ideology and shows that the center-periphery cleavage is not only related to religion but instead a socio-economic class related conflict.

Finally, the normalization of state/religion relations was accomplished not only by the AKP's success. International powers, especially the European Union (EU), supported democratic improvements in Turkey. Turkey's eagerness to achieve EU membership made a military intervention during the early years of the AKP unlikely. This provided the AKP government with a wider space in which to carry out its policies, in what can be called the *normalization of democracy*. Especially since 2010, democracy has become the only game in town. It is now clear that the AKP came in with elections and can go out only by elections. Secular opposition parties have stopped seeking the help of military or other state institutions, and have merely appealed to the public for their votes. Its first effects showed during the 2011 elections. The CHP's election manifestos emphasized secularism as usual, but preferred stressing personal liberties to seek public support. In addition, the conservative periphery's trust in democracy has consolidated since 2002. Since this group was excluded from politics for a long time, it had previously developed strong suspicions of democracy. All of these changes secured the way of periphery to the center.

Conclusion

I have explained the power struggle in Turkey in terms of Serif Mardin's center-periphery concept. Accordingly, the confrontation between the center and the periphery has been the most important social cleavage underlying Turkish politics since the late Ottoman Empire. In this cleavage, the center represents the elite who possess economic and political power, while the periphery represents the rest of the people, who are mostly religious. Educational opportunities have deepened this social stratification over time. In that context, Pierre Bourdieu's concept of social capital – along with economic, cultural, and symbolic capital – becomes useful to understand the power struggle between these two entities. To Bourdieu, social capital is a force that helps to create and sustain pre-existing social advantages. The center wants to extend its previous privileges and advantages, while the periphery wants to share in the same benefits. Therefore, it is more appropriate to explain this discontent among the secular elites in terms of a power struggle between the center and the periphery, and the access of conservatives to an upper-class lifestyle. This is the origin of the power struggle between the AKP government and other secular state institutions in the time period, 2002-2012. In that

struggle, the AKP has represented the periphery, whereas the Republican People's Party (CHP), the military, the universities, and the higher judiciary have represented the center. While the AKP held more power following every election, the previous elites have lost more power on the state level, a development that can be read as the conservative periphery displacing the secular center to some extent.

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