THE RISE OF RELIGIOUS NATIONALISM IN TURKEY AND INDIA:

THE POWER OF ORGANIZATION

Perin Gökçe

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Perin Gökçe

Advisor: Jonathan Laurence, Ph.D.

ABSTRACT

What explains the rise of religious nationalism in established and ostensibly secular democracies? The resurgence of religion in the public sphere has transformed the political landscape of dozens of countries over the last half century, including authoritarian and democratic regimes and developed and developing states. This dissertation seeks to explain how and why religious nationalists came to power in two large democracies in the developing world, Turkey and India, despite the unwavering commitment of those countries' modern founders to secularism. In both cases, religious nationalists struggled for decades to unseat entrenched political parties and win national elections. They were often persecuted, banned and jailed for their political activism. However, by the 1990s, they began to challenge their secular opponents and win power. Based on in-depth interviews with political elites and activists from the Justice and Development Party (AKP) in Turkey and the Bharata Janata Party (BJP) in India, I argue that party activists in both countries were able to build tightly controlled, hierarchical political organizations that benefited from the dense networks of religious associations. Crucially, they used these networks to create a robust local presence and active, year-round grassroots organizations and develop what I refer to as "personalistic membership parties." This new party type, I argue, is different from both elite (cadre) and mass parties, and explains the continuing electoral achievements and political resilience of the BJP and the AKP even in the face of numerous crises. In addition, I explore how secular actors instrumentalized religion for their own electoral purposes and, in doing so, counter-intuitively strengthened the religious movements they sought to oppose. More broadly, the comparison of India and Turkey helps to illuminate the problems and future of the secular state in the non-Western world, as both countries are now governed by right-wing populist, religious majoritarianism that challenges the secular nature of the state and its democratic character.

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Chapter 1: The Rise of Religious Nationalism in Turkey and India

The resurgence of religious nationalism in the public sphere has transformed the political landscape of dozens of countries over the last half century. Since the 1970s, and particularly in the post-Cold War era, religious activists have entered politics in places as different as Egypt and Indonesia, Hungary and Poland. This kind of political engagement has taken place in democracies and in authoritarian regimes, developed and developing nations, countries with strict church-state separation and ones with firm ties to specific traditions, and in virtually every region of the globe.[1] These instances of religious nationalism, however, have varied substantially in terms of their impact on the political sphere.

This dissertation seeks to explain how and why religious nationalism came to power in two very large democracies in the developing world, Turkey and India. Both are unlikely candidates given the strictly secular origins of both nation states and their founding fathers, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and Jawaharlal Nehru. In both, religious nationalists struggled for decades to unseat entrenched political parties to win at the national polls. They were often persecuted, banned and jailed for their political activism. Yet, since the 1990's, both the Justice and Development Party (AKP) in Turkey and the Bharata Janata Party (BJP) in India have become not just successful but dominant forces in the political landscape. What explains their astounding ascent at the ballot box?

By exploring how secular actors instrumentalized religion for their own electoral purposes and counter intuitively strengthened the religious movements they were trying to oppose by normalizing the use of religious appeals in the public sphere and creating

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[1] Mark Juergensmeyer, *Global Rebellion: Religious Challenges to the Secular State, from Christian*

opportunities for further religious mobilization through the empowerment of religious

associations, this dissertation will show how religious parties challenged their secular

opponents in the late 1990's. More specifically, I will show that activists in both

countries were able to leverage local level mobilization efforts for national level electoral

success by building centralized, hierarchical political organizations that tapped into the

dense networks of religious associations to create a strong local presence on the ground,

developing "personalistic mass membership parties." Finally, by focusing on

development and good governance, what I have termed "development populism"

religious nationalist parties were able to broaden their appeal beyond their core

constituency and attract voters from a wide array of groups in society.

Research Puzzle

In both India and Turkey, there has also been a significant cultural shift that has brought

religion to the forefront of the national conversation and the political realm in recent

years. In Turkey, nowadays, it is common to see mosques in places where there used to

be recreational centers or public parks, headscarves are ubiquitous, and state funded

religious schools have expanded significantly.[2] In utter defiance of Turkey's secular

tradition, Prime Minister Erdoğan famously declared his goal to "raise a pious

generation." Similarly in India, textbooks are being rewritten to glorify India's Hindu

civilization and downplay Islamic contributions to Indian history, beef-bans are being

implemented by an increasing number of states and cow-protection movements acting as

vigilante mobs are gaining strength. More recently, Prime Minister Modi's BJP passed a

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[2] Ali Carkoglu and Binnaz Toprak, *Religion, Society and Politics in a Changing Society*, TESEV Publications, 2010.

law that grants citizenship based on religious identity excluding Muslims in particular, dealing a significant blow to the country's secular foundation. This project was motivated by an attempt to make sense of these developments and examine the underlying factors that led to this kind of religious majoritariainism in two countries that once loudly proclaimed secularism to be a central aspect of their identity and state formation.

Thus, the central puzzle of this dissertation is understanding how and why religious nationalists came to power in countries that were founded on such strictly secular principles. Even though both movements started much earlier in the 1950's and 1970's in India and Turkey, respectively, they only came to power in recent years. Why did the earlier Hindu nationalist parties fail to command the level of support now possessed by the BJP? How and why did the BJP move from the political margins to the center? Likewise, how can we explain the success of the AKP, which grew out of a tradition of successive Islamist parties that was a marginal force up until the 1990's? How does a party with Islamist roots now occupy the center right in a country where religion was once relegated to the private realm by strict state supervision? My research aims to contribute to the understanding of how religious nationalist parties gain votes and power, appeal to a wide array of constituents and build strong political organizations, despite functioning in strictly secular political contexts that can be quite restrictive and exclusionary towards religious groups.

In doing so, this dissertation also speaks to the broader question of how political mobilization occurs and how religious nationalist political parties build strong bases of support in secular regimes. What binds the party elites and masses together against the backdrop of highly competitive and patronage driven politics? It is in this context that I

introduce the concept of a personalistic membership party, one that is distinguished from other types of political parties, in particular elite-based or cadre parties by its connection with the urban lower classes, the party's robust local presence, a grassroots organization that is active year-round and tightly controlled by the central leadership, and the importance attached by the party elite to the political education of members.

The Electoral Success of the AKP and the BJP

The AKP came to power by winning 34 percent of the vote in the November 2002 elections, only a little over a year after the party was formed. Due to the high threshold for representation in parliament, it captured 363 out of 550 seats and was able to form a government on its own, an astonishing victory given the unstable coalitions that had marked the Turkish political landscape in the 1990's.[3] In the July 2007 election, it fared even better, winning 46.6 percent of the vote, more than twice that of the CHP, the party representing Atatürk's secular tradition. This translated into another overwhelming majority in parliament, 440 out of 550 seats. The AKP lost its majority briefly in the June 7, 2011 elections but it's leader Recep Tayyip Erdoğan quickly called for snap elections that brought it to power once again in November of that year. With a renewed mandate under a new constitution approved in 2015, the party cemented its hold on power by winning yet another decisive victory most recently in June 2018. There is no doubt that the party enjoys a level of popularity unparalleled in Turkish history and it underscores the degree to which a form of political Islam has moved out of the shadows to become the major actor in Turkish politics. How can we explain this transformation? What

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[3] Cagaptay, Soner. *The New Sultan: Erdogan and the Crisis of Modern Turkey*. London ; New York: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 2017.

accounts for the meteoric rise of this once marginal religious political party? Moreover, how can we understand the AKP's political resilience in the face of numerous challenges from the secular establishment and highly credible accusations of corruption that have brought down such popular governments in the past?

The BJP's ascent over the last 38 years has also been stellar. It was officially created in 1980 but emerged from the Jana Sangh, the first Hindu nationalist party in India formed in 1951. Embedded in the larger umbrella of Hindu nationalist organizations, most importantly with the support of the RSS (Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh), the BJP won 182 seats in the Indian parliament's lower house, the Lok Sabha in the 1998 elections, and formed the National Democratic Alliance with Atal Behari Vajpayee as its leader.[4] The party remained in power until it suffered a defeat in the 2004 elections, after which it was the main opposition party for almost ten years. In 2014, the BJP led this time by Narendra Modi won a landslide victory with 282 seats in the Lok Sabha, the first time since 1984 that a party had won enough seats to govern without the support of other coalition parties. In 2019, it fared even better, capturing 303 seats, passing another milestone by becoming the first party other than Congress to return power with a majority in the Lok Sabha.[5]

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[4] Kingshuk Nag, *The Saffron Tide: The Rise of the B.J.P.* (New Delhi: Rupa/Rainlight Publications, 2014), 33.

[5] Ashutosh Varshney,"Modi Consolidates Power: Electoral Vibrancy, Mounting Liberal Deficits," Journal of Democracy 30, no. 4 (October 1, 2019): 63-77.

Vote share of the religious parties since 1990
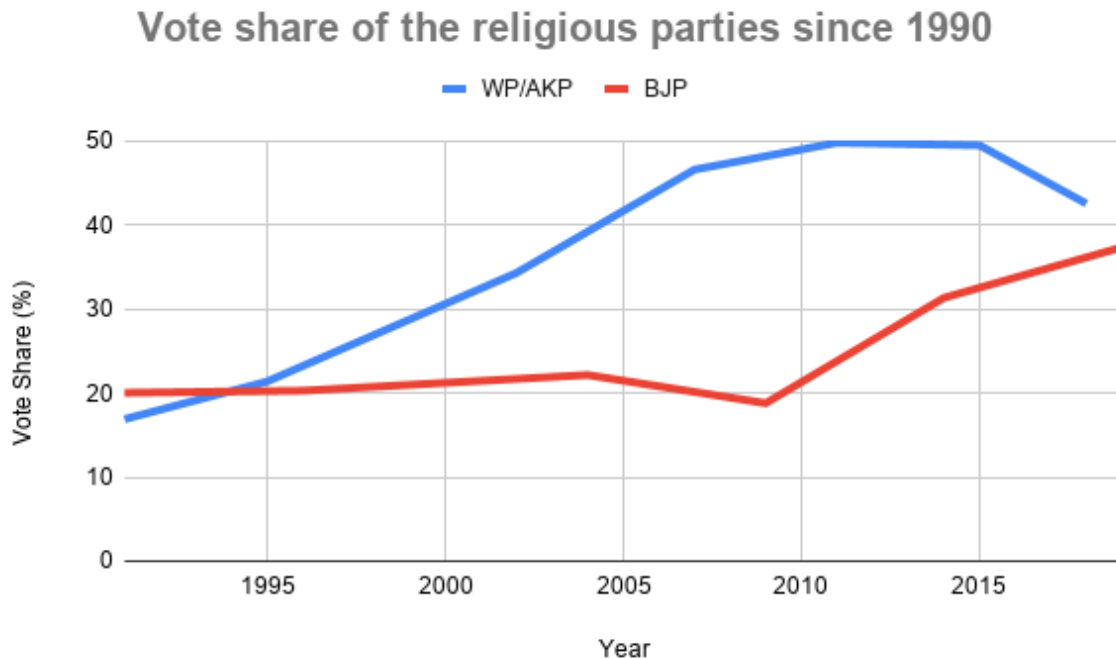
Figure 1.1 Parliamentary Election Performance of Religious Parties in Turkey and India

There are significant differences between the cases of India and Turkey in terms of sub-regional variation, religious diversity and the presence of a significant religious minority (200 million Muslims in India) and most obviously size, yet both countries have witnessed the rise of religious nationalism which makes a structured comparison of the rise of religious parties in these two contexts worthwhile. India and Turkey are both large developing democracies that grew out of the collapse of empires, and were led by charismatic founding fathers aspiring to the model of European modernity. They are also multi-ethnic and multi-religious societies, where religion and secularism are among the important socio-political divisions. Yet, they are also very different which makes the rise of religious nationalism in both countries roughly around the same time so puzzling. India has a long experience with British colonialism and inherited much of its legal-bureaucratic structure and institutions from the British where as Turkey was never

colonized and most of its laws and institutions are modeled on the French system. India is religiously much more diverse with Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists and Jains living together for centuries, and primarily for this reason adopted a more inclusive vision of secularism during the country's founding, compared to its Turkish counterpart. Nonetheless, religious political parties have entered politics and come to power by competitive elections in both countries, challenging the secular establishment and providing us with an example of how religious parties mobilize and govern, which makes the comparison analytically relevant and compelling.

Drawing on these two cases, this project will explore the factors that contributed to the rise and electoral success of these parties emphasizing the ways in which they mobilize voters, their organizational strategies and associational linkages along with the structural factors that shape the political context within which these parties operate. The comparison of India and Turkey is also extremely illuminating of the problems and future of the secular state in the non-Western world as both countries are now governed by right-wing populist, majoritarian parties that pose a challenge to the secular nature of the state and its democratic character, despite significant differences in their historical and political contexts.

Given the enormous significance of the cases of Turkey and India as experiments in non-Western secular statehood that now face uncertain futures, it is surprising that there have been few comparative studies of the two countries. The two countries and their experience of state secularism are the subjects of two entirely separate bodies of scholarly literature. Since the 1950's American, European and Turkish scholars have written extensively on various aspects and problems of secularism and the state in Turkey. In the

1990's sharply critical perspectives on Kemalism and state secularism began to be published by Turkish scholars, the so-called post-Kemalist literature. But all of this very extensive literature over the last six decades seems blind to the existence of India, the other major non-Western secular state, with the only exception of a review article by the Turkish scholar Nur Yalman published in an Indian academic journal in the early 1990's.[6]

Figure 1.2 Number of Seats of Religious Parties in Indian (Lok Sabha) and Turkish Parliament (TBMM)

Theoretical Approaches to the Study of Religion and Politics

In general, the literature on political parties has not paid much attention to religious parties as distinctive organizations, often treating them as the byproduct of pre-

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[6] Nur Yalman, "On Secularism and Its Critics: Notes on Turkey, India and Iran." *Contributions to Indian Sociology* 25, no. 2 (July 1, 1991): 233–66.

established social cleavages rather than dynamic agents capable of shaping their political environment. In practice, three approaches have dominated the contemporary study of politics and religion: secularization, civilization, and religious marketplace theories. Although they have all contributed notable insights regarding the intersection of religion and politics, each also has important, distinctive limitations when it comes to examining religious parties.

First, secularization theory has been the dominant approach to the study of religion and politics for over a century. In the most general terms, secularization proposes that economic development leads to the differentiation of religious authority from other arenas of social life, the decline of individual religiosity, and the retreat of religion from the public sphere.[7] Among political scientists, secularization theory, also known as secularization-modernization, expects economic development to change the beliefs and preferences found among members of the electorate, making religious political engagement less effective and appealing.[8] According to this theory, religion is a "traditional" phenomenon, which will eventually be marginalized by the modernization process, including industrialization, urbanization and mass education. Yet the deterministic and universalitic quality of secularization-based models leaves little room for agency on the part of religious leaders or politicians, and takes little note of potential differences among religious traditions.

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[7] José Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World*. 1 edition. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 43.

[8] Norris, Pippa, and Ronald Inglehart. *Sacred and Secular: Religion and Politics Worldwide*. Cambridge University Press, 2004. See also Lipset, Seymour Martin. "Some Social Requisites of Democracy: Economic Development and Political Legitimacy." *The American Political Science Review* 53, no. 1 (1959): 69–105.

There are a number of established explanations for the emergence and development of religious parties that focus on the socioeconomic, cultural and demographic characteristics of environments in which parties operate. According to the one derived from secularization theory, differing levels of economic development are the key factor behind differences in the role of religion across states and societies.[9] In countries where modernization has progressed most, states and markets are secure in their autonomy from religious influence, and religion is relegated to the private sphere. In this framework, religious parties may emerge in an attempt to forestall the secular trend, but whither as individuals reject religious identities, norms, and associations in favor of their secular variants.[10] A related body of scholarship highlights differences in existential security as the key source of variation in attitudes towards religion, with greater security leading to the dealignment of religion and partisan preference.[11] However, a diverse body of work on the rise of Islamic activism suggests that this impact may even be reversed, with economic expansion empowering previously marginalized religious communities and granting them greater voice in the political arena.[12]

Second, the civilization approach treats religions as the core components of clearly defined cultural units that extend beyond the nation state, and argues that their essential principles and doctrines determine the attitudes and beliefs of their followers

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[9] Lipset, Seymour Martin. "Some Social Requisites of Democracy: Economic Development and Political Legitimacy." *The American Political Science Review* 53, no. 1 (1959): 69–105.

[10] Smith, D. E. *Religion And Political Development*. (Little, Brown and Company, 1970), 124.

[11] Norris, Pippa, and Ronald Inglehart. *Sacred and Secular: Religion and Politics Worldwide*. (Cambridge University Press, 2004), 196.

[12] Göle, Nilüfer. *Islam and Secularity: The Future of Europe's Public Sphere*. Duke University Press Books, 2015. See also Gumuscu, Sebnem, and Deniz Sert. "The Power of the Devout Bourgeoisie: The Case of the Justice and Development Party in Turkey." *Middle Eastern Studies* 45, no. 6 (November 1, 2009): 953–68.

towards democracy, human rights, and religion-state relations[13]. Like secularization, the

civilization approach is deterministic, deriving political choices from fixed doctrines.

From this perspective, the presence of religious political parties reveals a tendency to fuse

political and religious authority, and thus betrays the essential incompatibility of

particular traditions and democratic institutions. The civilization approach is also

hampered by its essentialist underpinnings, which make it difficult to address variation

within traditions or changes over time. Such theories have so far left us unable to explain

the variation – among countries, over time, and within countries – in the success of

religious political movements.

Explanations for cross national variation in patterns of religious mobilization

based on the civilization approach focus on the differences between religious traditions,

arguing for their continuity over time and stable implications for public and political

behavior. In contrast to modernization theory, which tends to sideline religious actors and

treat them as reactionary, this approach emphasizes the distinctive properties of religious

communities, with an unfortunate and widespread tendency to reduce these to a fixed and

narrow set of texts and beliefs.[14] In its strongest form, civilization-based accounts of

religious engagement in politics are highly deterministic: in the absence of firmly

enforced secularist restrictions, such as those imposed by totalitarian Communist

regimes, religious parties should emerge wherever the population adheres to systems of

belief that do not embrace the distinction between religious and political authority.

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[13] Huntington, Samuel P. *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*. A edition. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2011. See also Lewis, Bernard. *What Went Wrong? The Clash Between Islam and Modernity in the Middle East*. New York: Harper Perennial, 2003.

[14] Huntington, Samuel P. *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*. A edition. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2011.

Finally, the religious marketplace model takes its cue from economics and highlights the importance of competition among religious denominations in driving popular religiosity and shaping the relationship between religion and state.[15] Yet by focusing almost exclusively on religious pluralism and interdenominational competition, this tradition has difficulty in addressing the changes taking place within particular traditions, and thus loses sight of a broad range of incentives and constraints shaping religious-political interaction.

The religious marketplace account draws on economic and rational choice models to propose the degree of inter-denominational competition as the driving force behind variations in religious behavior, not least in the political arena.[16] In contrast to much of modernization and civilization theories, state intervention is an important component in this research program. In particular, the role of regulation in sustaining religious monopolies is often used to explain differences in levels of competition, which in turn diminish the vibrancy of the religious marketplace.[17] Looking specifically at the interaction between religious communities and political entrepreneurs, Gill argues that greater religious diversity facilitates the emergence of religious liberty, as minority denominations push politicians to craft neutral rules that will allow them to grow peacefully in civil society, rather than clash in the political realm.[18] However, he also

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[15] Finke, Roger. "Religious Deregulation: Origins and Consequences." *Journal of Church and State* 32, no. 3 (July 1, 1990): 609–26.

[16] Gill, Anthony. *Rendering unto Caesar: The Catholic Church and the State in Latin America*. New edition edition. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1998. See also Trejo, Guillermo. "Religious Competition and Ethnic Mobilization in Latin America: Why the Catholic Church Promotes Indigenous Movements in Mexico." *American Political Science Review* 103, no. 3 (August 2009): 323–42.

[17] Iannaccone, Laurence R., Roger Finke, and Rodney Stark. "Deregulating Religion: The Economics of Church and State." *Economic Inquiry* 35, no. 2 (1997): 350–64.

[18] Gill, Anthony. *The Political Origins of Religious Liberty*. 1 edition. Cambridge University Press, 2007.

notes that these tendencies are likely to be resisted by the majority, potentially leading to greater religious mobilization in the short run.

Like these three religion-centered approaches, the mainstream literature on political parties also faces difficulties when examining religious political organizations. Rationalist-institutionalist analysis of political parties starts from the premise that parties advocate policies in order to win votes, rather than pursue vote in order to implement policies, and thus consciously neglect their ideological preferences and associational linkages.[19] Religious parties, whose members and supporters often seem to display a remarkable resilience in the face of electoral challenges, at first appear as an irrational exception to the rule.

Structuralist work on political parties, which focuses on the social foundations of party systems and organizations, in turn has difficulties explaining why religious cleavages are activated in some cases but not in others, and tends to treats parties as the passive inheritors of pre-existing social conditions[20]. Moreover, by focusing almost exclusively on the impact of church-state conflicts, it tends to treat religious parties as inherently reactive and reactionary.[21] Thus, while rationalist approaches are inadequate because they purposefully remove religion from their calculations, structuralists are impaired by an excessively rigid approach to religion's effect on political competition.

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[19] Downs, Anthony. "An Economic Theory of Political Action in a Democracy." *Journal of Political Economy* 65, no. 2 (1957): 135–50. See also Cox. *Making Votes Count.* Cambridge, U.K.; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997.

[20] Kalyvas, Stathis N. *The Rise of Christian Democracy in Europe.* The Wilder House Series in Politics, History and Culture. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996.

[21] Lipset, Seymour Martin, and Stein Rokkan, eds. *Party Systems and Voter Alignments: Cross-National Perspectives:* Free Press, 1967.

Structuralist scholarship focuses primarily on conflicts between states and religious communities in order to explain the rise of religious parties.[22] This focus on religion-state conflict has become a starting point for scholars working from a variety of different theoretical positions but united by their interest in the role of state actors in intentionally or unintentionally encouraging religious political mobilization. From a rationalist perspective, Stathis Kalyvas convincingly points out that liberals' attempts to diminish the political influence of the Catholic Church led the latter to encourage forms of political mobilization that eventually led to the emergence of religious parties.[23] By distinguishing religious communities as uniquely dangerous to national politics, secularist lawmakers in effect encourage their organization and mobilization, either by strengthening religious presence in existing parties or by encouraging the formation of new electoral vehicles.

Recent Developments in the Literature

Over the last decade, scholars examining the resurgence of religion in politics have begun to address and overcome the various limitations of the three approaches discussed above. In doing so, they have developed new analytical and theoretical resources, resulting in increasingly favorable conditions for comparative research on religious parties. There is a growing awareness of the complexities of state-religion relations. The strict separation of religion and state, often taken as an unproblematic baseline by the modernization and civilization literature, is neither common nor somehow a default position.

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[22] Ibid, 87.

[23] Kalyvas, Stathis N. *The Rise of Christian Democracy in Europe*. The Wilder House Series in Politics, History and Culture. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996.

The vast majority of states, even democratic states, are deeply engaged in the regulation of religion, and religious communities frequently operate in democratic public spheres.[24] This prompted Alfred Stepan to speak of the "twin tolerations", or the democratic requirement of minimal "boundaries of freedom" for political institutions vis-à-vis religious communities and vice-versa.[25] This not only clarifies the normative debate about the relationship between secularism and democracy, but also sheds light on the variety of institutions that can govern religion in democratic environments. In addition, more inductive and empirical explorations of the varieties of state involvement in religion reinforce the notion that there is a substantial range of institutional arrangements structuring state-religion relations around the world, and that these are compatible with a range of religious traditions and regime types.[26]

Rationalist scholars have also begun to explore the complex interaction between religious and political institutions. Working in the religious marketplace tradition, Anthony Gill effectively points to the contingent nature of religious freedom, and how its various institutional supports emerge in response not only to growing religious diversity but also through religious interaction with secular authorities.[27] Building upon a different strand of scholarship, Stathis Kalyvas points out how the presence of strong religious authorities can aid religious parties in demonstrating their commitment to competitive politics.[28] Guillermo Trejo convincingly shows that the decision by religious authorities

[24] Casanova, José. *Public Religions in the Modern World*. 1 edition. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994.

[25] Stepan, Alfred C. *Arguing Comparative Politics*. (Oxford University Press, 2001), 216.

[26] Fox, Jonathan. *A World Survey of Religion and the State*. Cambridge University Press, 2008. See also Monsma, Stephen V., and J. Christopher Soper. *The Challenge of Pluralism: Church and State in Five Democracies*. 2nd Edition edition. Lanham, Md: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2008.

[27] Gill, Anthony. *The Political Origins of Religious Liberty*. 1 edition. Cambridge University Press, 2007.

[28] Kalyvas, Stathis N. "Commitment Problems in Emerging Democracies: The Case of Religious Parties." *Comparative Politics* 32, no. 4 (2000): 379–98. https://doi.org/10.2307/422385.

to encourage lay activism derives from the way in which religious communities are organized as well as the opportunities created by local political conditions.[29]

Scholarship on Islamist politics has become increasingly aware of the diversity of religious parties and the variety of links between religious and political mobilization. Scholars have paid increasing attention to differences among Islamist parties, finding substantial contrasts both among and within parties, most often along the moderation-radicalism continuum.[30] Arguments emphasizing the importance of specific party types, such as Vali Nasr's "Muslim Democrats" contain implicit categorizations and arguments about the conditions under which various types of parties are most likely to emerge.[31] The incorporation of social movement theory has further enhanced this kind of research. The volume edited by Quintan Wicktorowitz contains several essays that use this framework to explore the diverse ties between religious and political activists in the Middle East.[32] Jillian Schwedler uses them to examine the causes of moderation by Islamists in Jordan and Yemen[33] and Janine Clark shows how middle-class networks sustain political activism in Egypt, Jordan, and Yemen.[34]

All of these accounts suggest a more complex and fluid pattern of interaction between politicians and their religious supporters in civil society than contemplated in

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[29] Trejo, Guillermo. "Religious Competition and Ethnic Mobilization in Latin America: Why the Catholic Church Promotes Indigenous Movements in Mexico." *American Political Science Review* 103, no. 3 (August 2009): 323–42.

[30] Jillian M. Schwedler. *Faith in Moderation: Islamist Parties in Jordan and Yemen*. Cambridge University Press, 2006.

[31] Nasr, Vali. *The Rise of Islamic Capitalism: Why the New Muslim Middle Class Is the Key to Defeating Extremism*. 60625th edition. New York: Free Press, 2010.

[32] Wiktorowicz, Quintan, ed. *Islamic Activism: A Social Movement Theory Approach*. Bloomington, Ind: Indiana University Press, 2003.

[33] Schwedler, Jillian, and Jillian M. Schwedler. *Faith in Moderation: Islamist Parties in Jordan and Yemen*. Cambridge University Press, 2006.

[34] Clark, Janine A. *Islam, Charity, and Activism: Middle-Class Networks and Social Welfare in Egypt, Jordan, and Yemen*. Bloomington, Ind: Indiana University Press, 2004.

earlier literatures. Thanks to these theoretical developments, it is increasingly possible to engage in the systematic examination of the varieties of religious parties. However, there are still significant conceptual and empirical gaps that need to be addressed if a coherent and sustainable research program on religious parties is to emerge. There is still a general scarcity of work comparing religious politics across traditions and over time. With a few recent and notable exceptions, cross-country comparative studies tend to restrict themselves to cases within the same religious contexts. [35]

As Kalyvas points out, this can result in important misconceptions about the likely causes of religious activism. For example, scholars of Islamist politics often view it as uniquely salient, with little consideration given to similarities with Catholic activism earlier in the century.[36] This lack of comparative work is matched by the scarcity of research examining religions' "differential appeal, persuasiveness, and political salience over time."[37] This is most present in studies that treat religious traditions as clusters of clearly bounded doctrines with stable implications for political engagement.[38] This study is an attempt to bridge the gap by comparing the emergence of religious parties and the associational resources they bring to the table in two countries with very different religious traditions, Islam and Hinduism.

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[35] Sultan Tepe, *Beyond Sacred and Secular: Politics of Religion in Israel and Turkey*. Stanford University Press, 2008. Altınordu, Ateş. "The Politicization of Religion: Political Catholicism and Political Islam in Comparative Perspective." *Politics & Society* 38, no. 4 (December 1, 2010): 517–51.

[36] Stathis N. Kalyvas, *The Rise of Christian Democracy in Europe*. The Wilder House Series in Politics, History and Culture. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996. See also Jose Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World*. 1 edition. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994.

[37] Eva Bellin, "Faith in Politics. New Trends in the Study of Religion and Politics." *World Politics* 60, no. 2 (January 2008): 315–47.

[38] Lewis, Bernard. *What Went Wrong: The Clash Between Islam and Modernity in the Middle East*. New York: Harper Perennial, 2003.

Political mobilization does not occur mechanically or automatically. Political actors, particularly party leaders and candidates, *choose* to invest time and energy into crafting appeals to religious sectarian identity, forming alliances with religious associations, and building political organizations. Mobilizing religion can be a powerful means for attracting and consolidating voter support, but like any political strategy it has costs and risks. Will the use of religious symbols and slogans be perceived as manipulative and illegitimate? Do potential associational partners have the ability to reach a substantial number of voters? Will authorities challenge the appropriateness of religious associational links or religiously informed policy? The answers to these kinds of questions weigh heavily on the calculations of political actors, and are systematically affected by features of the political and electoral context.

Political Parties and the "Personalistic Membership-Party"

This dissertation also contributes to the literature on political parties and party typologies by developing the concept of a "personalistic mass membership-party" which is then used to explain the electoral success of the AKP and the BJP. Although the literature on party typologies is very rich, it is possible to define a basic distinction that is present, either implicitly or explicitly, in most of the scholarship. This distinction is between "elite-based" (cadre, catch-all, electoral-professional and cartel) and "mass-based" (mass party) models.[39] In his seminal work on political parties published in the early 1950s, Duverger differentiated the "committee" or "caucus" organization of the elites from the "branch" organizations of the working classes. Duverger associated the committee or caucus

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[39] Maurice Duverger, *Political Parties, Their Organization and Activity in the Modern State*. [3d ed.] Translated by Barbara and Robert North. With a foreword by D. W. Brogan.. (University Paperbacks, 82. London: Methuen, 1969), 23

organization with cadre parties and the branch organization with mass parties.[40]

According to him, the difference between these two parties was related to a structural

quality rather than the quantity of their members. Borrowing Duverger's framework, I

build on his definition and combine various characteristics of elite and mass based parties

in the typology presented below to conceptualize a unique form of party organization that

emerges from the Indian and Turkish experience, one that is not captured by the existing

literature.

To Duverger, mass parties were distinguished from cadre parties by the

importance attached to the local presence of the party and the regular year-round

activities of the party as well as the centrality of indoctrination and education of party

members. Another distinguishing point of the mass party that Duverger emphasized was

the importance of the financial contributions of ordinary members in this kind of

organizational structure. In contrast, cadre parties depended on the financial means of

limited interest groups as well as on professionals who knew how to run campaigns.

According to Duverger, the electoral achievements of mass parties in the early 20th

century led many elite-based parties to adopt the organizations of mass parties and started

a process of contagion from the left.

The two ideal types of party organizations that emerge from this vast scholarship

are: a mass-based approach relying on tight the control of leadership over a massive

membership organization and an elite-based one depending on mass communication,

centralized finance, campaign experts and professionals. Relatively recent literature has

also confirmed this distinction between mass parties and more modern elite parties that

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[40] Maurice Duverger, *Political Parties, Their Organization and Activity in the Modern State*. [3d ed.] Translated by Barbara and Robert North. With a foreword by D. W. Brogan.. (University Paperbacks, 82. London: Methuen, 1969), 33.

rely on technological instruments instead of a massive membership organization. For instance, Panebianco differentiated the 'mass bureaucratic party' from the 'electoral-professional party' and pointed out the decline of the vanguard class, or the particular, insulated social segments in which parties took root as the main reason for the decline of the mass party. According to Panebianco, electoral-professional parties were distinguished from mass parties by the importance the former attached to campaign professionals and experts instead of the party bureaucracy. Panebianco also pointed out the central role of ideologies in mass parties, whereas the emphasis shifted to leaders' competence and managerial issues in electoral-professional parties.[41]

Beginning in the 1970's, as a result of the rise of television and the social transformations that started to dissolve the class basis of the mass parties in Western democracies, Epstein argued that the mass parties were becoming an exception rather than the norm.[42] Meanwhile, scholars have also noted that parties started to invest less and less in the party on the ground or in attracting members and therefore declared the mass party model as obsolete, especially in Western Europe. According to Richard Katz, the fall of the mass party and the rise of increasingly elite-based catch-all or cartel parties required the 'de-activation of activist members' within the parties as they became to be seen as constraints on the party leadership.[43] In the context of Western liberal democracies, the functions performed by the party organization could easily be restricted to election time, and therefore it would be plausible to assume a decline of the presence

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[41] Angelo Panebianco, *Political Parties: Organization and Power*. Translated by Marc Silver. 1 edition. (Cambridge, England ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 232.

[42] Leon D. Epstein, *Political Parties in the American Mold*. Reprint edition. (Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), 23.

[43] Richard S. Katz and Peter Mair. *Democracy and the Cartelization of Political Parties*. (Oxford : Colchester, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 2018), 134.

of the party on the ground and of 'warm bodies' actively working for the party, and the rise of the party in public office since nationalized, professionalized campaigns backed by state resources would be sufficient to secure parties' remaining in power.

However, this literature is derived mostly from the experience of Western democracies and does not sufficiently take into account the conditions of the developing world. While some social segments in less developed political settings could be easily reached by television, mass media or the internet, to reach certain low-income sectors of developing societies requires the presence of robust organizational capabilities and a strong local presence, more precisely, a mass-based organizational strategy that combines campaign professionals and expertise with activists on the ground, building personal ties with voters.

Moreover, when party politics and electoral politics are perceived as a game played by powerful and politicized non-party actors such as armies, powerful judicial and bureaucratic elites, and allegedly mainstream but deeply partisan media groups, party organizations can be considered something more than a professional player in an ordinary contest of electoral politics. In these kinds of circumstances, it is better to understand the mobilizational functions of party organizations as power capabilities available to power contenders.[44] It is in this context to fill an existing gap in the literature that I develop the party type of a personalistic membership party, which is a hybrid model that draws on various characteristics of both elite and mass parties, and emphasizes an accumulation of power in the hands of the leadership. More specifically, this type combines a massive membership organization with a robust local presence, attributes of a mass-based party,

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`   [44] Roberts, Kenneth M. "Populism, Political Conflict, and Grass-Roots Organization in Latin America." *Comparative Politics* 38, no. 2 (2006): 127–48.

and the use of extensive campaign professionals, political marketing techniques (i.e.

public opinion surveys and media), qualities associated with elite-based parties in the

literature.

Party Types Features	Mass-based	Elite-based	Personalistic Membership Party (AKP and BJP)
Ideology and program	Important-rigid	Less important-vague	Less important-vague (developmental populism)
Membership salience	High	Low	High
Local presence	High	Low	High
Attachment to a special social segement	Strong (social class or denominational group)	Weak (heterogenous electorate)	Weak (cross-class and caste coalitions)
Relationship between the party center and local branches	Strong-hierarchical	Weak	Strong-hierarchical
Main campaign technique	Labor intensive	Capital intensive	Hybrid
Source of finance	Members	State and interest groups	Hybrid (predominantly state and elite based)
Organizational presence and activity	Permanent year-round	Primarily during election periods	Permanent year-round
Professionals	Not important	Important	Important
Top leadership	Less Visible	Highly visible	Highly visible
Party Bureacracy	Developed	Weak	Developed
Public image of the leader and degree of leadership autonomy	Low	High	High (Personalistic)

Source: Author's compilation.

The Theoretical Argument and Hypotheses

There have been a number of studies explaining the BJP's rise to power. While some have focused on the social services provided by the BJP's intermediaries, others have drawn attention to its use of communal appeals to distract poor and lower caste Hindus from their material concerns.[45] Likewise, scholars of Turkish politics have cited the growth of the Turkish economy, the rise of an Islamic bourgeoisie and the appeal of a more pragmatic and less religious ideology as the factors behind the AKP's success. The literature on the AKP focuses either exclusively on the "charisma" of Erdoğan or on the role of redistributive mechanisms and patronage networks and has overlooked party organization and strategy in general. In this dissertation, I argue that the electoral success of the both the AKP and the BJP was driven by the development of a "personalistic membership party," which consists of a massive membership organization active year round with a strong local presence and a centralized, hierarchical party structure that exercises strict supervision over the rank and file.

This organization is built by and around a personalistic leadership and managed carefully by political marketing strategies. Thus, my argument puts strong emphasis on the organizational agency of the party. In this context, it is different from various studies, which have focused on economy and ideology-based explanations. That being said, I also evaluate the party's agency in a dynamic interaction with its political environment and the wider electoral context. The first two chapters explain how structural factors shaped the political context in which both Islamists and Hindu nationalists gained strength and entered the political arena in the 1980's. The party elites considered the "personalistic membership party" as a strategic response to the constraints and opportunities they faced

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[45] See Tarih Thachil, *Elite Parties, Poor Voters*, (Cambridge University Press, 2014), 32.

within the historical and political context of a developing country and a secular state. This kind of disciplined, hierarchical organization, which exercised strict control and supervision over the rank and file was chosen by the party elite to overcome the tensions between the ideologically motivated party cadres and the more pragmatic party leaders focused on expanding the party's base. More specifically, my argument places strong emphasis on the fact that the AKP and the BJP emerged as strategic and ultimately politically successful actors mainly as a result of decades of labor-intensive organizational work and disciplined grassroots activism at the local level, an organizational infrastructure and work ethic inherited from the religious movements of which these parties emerged.

Once the political opportunity for religious mobilization was expanded in the 1980's as a result of the Congress party and the Turkish military's instrumental use of religion, both organizations benefited primarily from ties to religious associations and grassroots efforts of political mobilization at the local level. As the Hindu nationalist movement mobilized around the Ramjanabhoomi campaign in the early the 1990's, the BJP learned to create strategic alliances with different political groups and skillfully tapped into the resources of a coalition of various right-wing Hindu nationalist organizations, like the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), Shiv Sena, Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), collectively known as the Sangh Parivar. Likewise, the AKP, benefited greatly from its own ties to religious associations, which had expanded rapidly in the 1960's most notably the communities led by Said Nursi and the Nakshibendi Sufi order. The Milli Görüş movement (National Outlook), in particular, drew on the resources conferred by these communities and the new crop of religious

activists to forge an explicitly political project lending support to the AKP. Thus, when economic liberalization expanded the resources available to members of these religious networks, they reinforced the vibrant networks of politically engaged religious associations expanding the AKP's reach.

For all the attention given to political parties during elections and the scrutiny they receive during their time in office, surprisingly little is understood about the internal dynamics and organization of parties and how they, and the factions within them, acquire, lose, and maintain power. This dissertation contends that parties should be studied as clusters of relationships rather than as unitary black boxes. Keeping in mind the internal and external factors that shape the political context within which parties operate, the following chapters seek to disaggregate the party to examine how individuals and groups within particular parties gain influence and control over party resources and decision-making; and, relatedly, to examine party relationships with non-party actors, particularly social groups and religious movements, to study how parties, and groups within parties, interact with, gain strength from, and compete with such actors in their quest for control over local and national political landscapes.

In a nutshell, my argument in this dissertation is that the party's organizational dynamics and strength played a crucial role in the success of the AKP and the BJP, and is at the heart of the current hegemonic party system in Turkey and India. The party's agency was about emotionally engaging with its voters and supporters and creating and sustaining a unique organizational culture conducive to winning elections. The actions and choices made by the party elite, the activists' engagement with the party organization, their emotional and stylistic appeal to the electorate was key to

transforming the structural and social circumstances into concrete electoral gains for the party. In terms of the dissertation's theoretical relevance, I argue that, if a particular strategic and organizational agency (developmental populism and the personalistic membership party) is embraced by a new party in a developing country, it is possible, first, to overcome the challenges posed by the secular elite embedded in the establishment, and then, to construct electoral hegemony.

This dissertation implies that the strategic choices and actions of leaders and the political elite are extremely important. But it also acknowledges the certain structural circumstances and conditions that created these leaders, who were prone to taking these particular decisions and actions. Erdoğan, as a political leader, was certainly the creation of the political hurdles and circumstances that he, and the political tradition of which he was a member, encountered in the 1980s and 1990s (as explained in Chapter 3) and the politicized socio-cultural divides of Turkey after the transition to multi-party politics by the end of the 1940's. Modi, too, was the product of the RSS and its encounters with the Indian state and his leadership was shaped by the ideological and organizational traditions of the Hindu nationalist movement. Therefore, the broader theoretical framework for this project is that individual agency is certainly key for the formation of collective political actors (such as the AKP), but the individual choices and actions of the leader and the experiences that shape collective agency are also the product of broader political, socio-cultural and social circumstances and structures.

Moreover, I propose **five hypotheses** derived from a detailed study of the history and politics of the religious movements and their interaction with state actors in India and Turkey:

1) Even though both states **regulated, supervised and controlled religion**, after independence the Indian state used its powers to reform religion, by banning certain discriminatory practices against lower castes but maintaining "equidistance" from all religions while the Turkish state attempted to restrict the practice of religion in the public sphere.

2) The **instrumental use of religion in the 1980's** by the Turkish and Indian secularists counter intuitively strengthened the religious movements they were trying to oppose by normalizing the use of religious appeals in the public sphere and creating opportunities for further religious mobilization through the empowerment of religious associations.

3) Religious parties took advantage of this political space by building on their ties to **religious associations,** which provided them with vast organizational networks, financial resources and a committed cadre of disciplined and dedicated activists trained in grassroots organizing.

4) In crucial elections, what political scientists often call "critical junctures", religious parties in both countries were able to frame their grievances against corrupt state elites by emphasizing good governance and relying on strategies of **"developmental populism"** thus broadening their appeal beyond the core constituency of religious voters. Moreover, both parties embraced neo-liberal economic policies in opposition to self-reliance or statism as they sought to challenge establishment parties, and their respective leaders Erdoğan and Modi campaigned as pro-business reformers open to foreign investment and the West, taking on the more ideologically motivated elements in their party.

5) Once in power, unable to deliver on economic promises and for various other reasons both the AKP and the BJP resorted to a majoritarian nationalist discourse and relied on **right-wing populism** in order to hold their coalition together, mobilize voters before elections and consolidate their grip on state power.

Method, Field Work and Sources

The political mobilization of religious groups occurs in a wide variety of settings ranging from authoritarian contexts in the Middle East to developed democracies in Western Europe. The scope conditions for this study is religious parties in electoral democracies with a competitive multi-party system, which is why India and Turkey are two cases that form the basis of this dissertation. The success of religious parties is measured by their performance in elections, which is why I have chosen to focus on these two countries despite the democratic erosion both have witnessed in recent years. Historically, Freedom House has rated both India and Turkey as Free although Turkey was downgraded to *Partly Free* following the Gezi Protests in 2013. Nonetheless, they represent two cases in which religious parties have not only been contesting elections (which can be considered free) but also winning them since their countries respective transition to democracy.

Political organization is a concrete strategy willfully pursued, and often debated, by the leaders, members and candidates of a political party, and can thus be identified by observing party activists behavior and intra-party polemics. For the dissertation project, I reviewed various candidate speeches, party manifestos, public endorsements of (and by) religious associations, website content and links, banners and slogans, newsletters and communiqués, among a variety of other materials associated with electoral campaigns.

Internal party documents and records of debates have also been particularly valuable sources of information.

During the summer of 2019, I also conducted in person interviews with both former and current AKP party officials, party activists and cadres, mainly in Ankara and Istanbul, Turkey at the AKP headquarters and local party offices. I had access to a number of key figures in the AKP party organization such as the President of the Women's Branch, Lütfiye Çam and Abdullah Cevdet Yılmaz, who served as Deputy Prime Minister in 2015 and is now in charge of the AKP's Foreign Relations, both of whom provided with me valuable insights and detail about the organizational dynamics of the party and the founding years of the AKP. Tuğrul Türkeş, a current MP from the AKP, but also a veteran center right politician and son of Alparslan Türkeş, the founder of Turkey's far-right nationalist movement was particularly forthcoming in comparing his experience in the AKP with that of the former center right parties. I also carried out in-depth interviews with provincial (il) and sub-provincial (ilçe) chairs, and neighborhood representatives in Ankara and Istanbul. I asked my interviewees open-ended questions about party activities at the local level, organizational characteristics of the party and the relationship between the provincial branches and the central headquarters. Veteran journalists from *Hürriyet* and *Sözcü*, in particular the Ankara Bureau Chief Deniz Zeyrek and academics at Koç University, METU and Bilkent were also very helpful in answering questions about the history and politics of the Islamist movement in Turkey.

Interviews with BJP officials and party activists were conducted via Zoom, Facetime and Whatsapp due to the COVID-19 outbreak in the summer of 2020 and the subsequent lockdown in India. Despite the circumstances, the interviews were quite

informative and provided me with a great deal of insight into how party activists carried out political campaigns, their mobilizing strategies, and the broader organizational context under which BJP activists operate. I had access to the only Muslim member of the Upper House of Parliament, the Rajya Sabha, from the BJP, M.J. Akbar, who also served as the party's National spokesperson in 2014 as well as the current National Secretary of the BJP, Shri Ram Madhav. Both interviews provided a unique glimpse into the thinking of the BJP leadership and the political strategies of the movement as well as the BJP's views on secularism, which contributed to my understanding of the party's political appeal. My interviews with scholars of Indian politics both at American Universities and abroad were also very helpful in shaping my understanding of the parallels between the Hindu nationalist movement and the Turkish experience as well as the differences, and pointed me towards a number of very useful resources I would not have stumbled upon on my own. This dissertation is informed by these interviews and supplemented by detailed case studies of the factors that led to the rise of both parties to power, paying attention in particular to the historical and political context in which these mobilization efforts took place. Each chapter will be divided into sections exploring particular periods, punctuated by major shifts in political and institutional contexts.

The dissertation begins by an examination of the particular historical context in which India and Turkey were established as nation states and the relationship that was forged between religion and state during this formative period. More specifically, the second chapter explores the different ways in which secularism was constructed, debated and institutionalized by the Turkish and Indian political elite in their respective constituent assemblies. In chapter three, I trace the origins of the religious political

movements in India and Turkey and the parties representing them in the political sphere, the AKP and the BJP respectively. This chapter highlights the role that religious associations played in providing organizational and ideological support to party activists in building robust political organizations. Prior to this mobilization, chapter three also explores how these movements benefited from the religious overtures made by the secular actors during the 1980's, in particular the leaders' instrumental use of religion. Chapter four analyzes the election victories of the AKP and the BJP in 2002 and 2014, respectively, and then develops the concept of a personalistic membership party to explain these remarkable electoral achievements. The next chapter examines the right-wing populist and majoritarian turn taken by both parties to establish themselves as hegemonic political actors after assuming power by elections. Finally, in the conclusion I offer some thoughts on what distinguishes the Indian experience from the Turkish one, the breakdown of democracy and institutional safeguards, and on the future of secularism in both India and Turkey.

Chapter 2
Religion and the State in India and Turkey: Restrictive v. Reformative Secularism

In order to understand the rise of religious parties in Turkey and India, it is important to examine the particular historical and institutional contexts in which these nation states were established and the relationship that was forged between religion and state during this formative period. For decades after the formation of the Republic of Turkey in 1923 and the Republic of India in 1950 as sovereign nation states, the principle of secularism was held to be a cornerstone of both state and nation in the two countries. In both Turkey and India, it was seemingly impossible to think of national identity without reference to the "secular" principle (laiklik in Turkish), or to conceive of the state without reference to its "secular" character.[46] This chapter will explore the different ways in which secularism was constructed, debated and institutionalized by the Turkish and Indian political elite and in their respective constituent assemblies. It will also analyze how secularism took hold through a period of political, cultural and social reforms following independence in both countries to infer how the stage was set for the subsequent decades of religious mobilization.

In both Turkey and India, the controlled inclusion of religion and religion-based movements in the public sphere was the primary means through which secular states established their authority.[47] In this chapter, I argue, that even though both states regulated, supervised and controlled religion, after the founding the Indian state used its

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[46] Ayşe Kadioğlu, "The Paradox of Turkish Nationalism and the Construction of Official Identity." *Middle Eastern Studies* 32, no. 2 (1996): 177–93.

[47] Alev Cinar, "Introduction: Religious Nationalism as a Consequence of Secularism." In *Visualizing Secularism and Religion*, edited by Alev Cinar, Srirupa Roy and Maha Yahya, 1–22. Egypt, Lebanon, Turkey, India. University of Michigan Press, 2012.

powers to reform religion while the Turkish state intended to restrict the practice of

religion in the public sphere. In this sense, one could argue that it was these secular

founding ideologies and the way in which secularism was constructed and interpreted that

at least in part laid the basis for the politicization of religion in these countries, and that

the later development of religiously based political movements are in fact products of

such secular systems. As such, these religious parties, which introduced alternative

national projects, cannot be analyzed without a more nuanced understanding of the

secular systems and founding ideologies that made them possible in the first place.

Religion and State in the Founding Period of Turkey and India

On April 10, 1928 Article 2 of the Turkish Republic's Constitution, which had stated that

'the religion of the Turkish state is Islam' was deleted and the Turkish Grand National

Assembly (TGNA) removed the constitutional articles requiring its deputies and

president "to take an oath before God" upon their election.[48] The preamble to the

legislation explained that this was to "assure religion would not become a tool in the

hands of those governing the state." Similarly, more than two decades later, on October

17, 1949, disagreement and contentious debate over the incorporation of the principle of

secularism took up most of the Indian Constituent Assembly's time. On that day H V

Kamath, began the discussions by moving an amendment to begin the preamble to the

Constitution by the phrase "In the name of God."[49] Responding to Pandit Kunzru's

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[48] Andrew Davison, *Secularism and Revivalism in Turkey: A Hermeneutic Reconsideration*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 141.
[49] Shefali Jha, "Secularism in the Constituent Assembly Debates, 1946-1950." *Economic and Political Weekly* 37, no. 30 (2002): 3175–3180.

objection that in invoking "the name of God, we are showing a sectarian spirit," Pandit Malaviya argued that it was not anti-secular for the preamble to begin with expressions such as "By the grace of the Supreme Being, lord of the universe, called by different names by different peoples of the world," since it was clear that not any particular religion's God was being sanctioned.[50]

Saksena pointed out that even the Irish constitution took God's name at the beginning of the preamble. Another objection, raised by Purnima Banerji, pointed out that references to God should not be put into the Constitution since that would make the sacred depend on the vagaries of democratic voting and demean religion.[51] She requested Kamath "not to put us through the embarrassment of having to vote upon God." In the end, the Indian Constituent Assembly voted against the amendment to include the phrase "in the name of God" in the preamble to the constitution.[52] Those who had proposed the amendment argued that it reflected the desire of the people of India; those who opposed the amendment contended that it would be "inconsistent with the preamble which promises liberty of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship to everyone."[53]

In the debates over taking an oath before God and including a reference to God in the preamble, the members of the TGNA and the Indian Constituent Assembly both emphasized that the doctrine of separation would help prevent the misuse of religion as a political instrument and safeguard equal citizenship and religious freedom. However, a close examination of the assembly debates shows that neither the dominant ideologies nor

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[50] Constituent Assembly Debates X: 439–4.

[51] Constituent Assembly Debates X: 441.
[52] B. Shiva Rao. *The Framing Of India's Constitution A Study*. (New Delhi, India: Universal Law Publishing. 1968), 131.
[53] Ibid, 134.

the legal-institutional arrangements sought an absolute separation of religion and state but rather allowed for state intervention in the religious sphere. [54]

Recent scholarship argues that secularism determines religion's form and the role it will play in society by regulating and marking the boundaries of the religious sphere.[55] As Mahmood has argued, despite the fact that most liberals cherish secularism for protecting religious freedom and preventing religious conflict through the doctrine of separation, it nevertheless continuously regulates religious life though judicial, legislative, and administrative means.[56] Alfred Stepan also points out in his work on twin tolerations, the vast majority of states, even democratic states in Western Europe, are deeply engaged in the regulation of religion, and religious communities frequently operate in democratic public spheres.[57] In other words, rather than completely removing religion from the public sphere, secularism determines "the space that religion may properly occupy in society" by reshaping and redefining it. However, the role that religion plays and the mechanisms through which the state interferes in the religious domain differs across national settings as a function of varying political, historical, and societal forces. [58]

India and Turkey are two leading examples of strictly secular states in the non-Western world. They are defined not by the distancing of the state from mosque and

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[54] Rochana Bajpai, "Constituent Assembly Debates and Minority Rights." *Economic and Political Weekly* 35, no. 21/22 (2000): 1837–1845. See also Davison, Andrew. *Secularism and Revivalism in Turkey: A Hermeneutic Reconsideration*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998.

[55] Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity*. (Stanford University Press, 2003), 38.

[56] Saba Mahmood, "Secularism, Hermeneutics, and Empire: The Politics of Islamic Reformation." *Public Culture* 18, no. 2 (May 1, 2006): 323–47.

[57] Alfred C. Stepan, *Arguing Comparative Politics*. (Oxford University Press, 2001), 216.

[58] Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity*. (Stanford University Press, 2003), 23.

temple but rather by the state's role of oversight and supervision of religious affairs and institutions.[59] Unlike the Western version of state secularism based on the doctrinal separation of church and state, the Indian and Turkish states have acted as assertive and often intrusive regulating authorities in the public display of religion, resulting in the entanglement of the state and the religious domain, rather than separation. In both cases, the state is legally and constitutionally empowered to do so, and this is the crucial common feature of the Indian and Turkish secular states.[60]

Focusing on this interventionist aspect of secularism, this chapter distinguishes between two types of state intervention, restrictive and reformative, and explores how each complements different understandings of national identity in Turkey and India. In both types of intervention, the state seeks to transform the majority religion, which in its secularized and modernized form would then further the creation of a secular nation-state by complementing national identity.[61] Secularism was a core element, perhaps the core element of the Kemalist and Nehruvian conceptions of national identity. However, these two types of state interventions construct national identity in different ways. While restrictive intervention is more concerned with establishing a monolithic understanding of national identity reflecting a uniform ethnicity and religiosity, reformative intervention seeks to build an overarching national identity that brings together the cultural and religious diversity of society, while at the same time liberating it from oppressive

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[59] Srirupa Roy, "Temple and Dam, Fez and Hat: The Secular Roots of Religious Politics in India and Turkey." *Commonwealth & Comparative Politics* 48, no. 2 (2010): 148–172.
[60] Rajeev Bhargava, *The Promise of India's Secular Democracy*. (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2010), 32.

practices carried out in the name of religion.[62]

Moreover, the reasons justifying state intervention and the methods used to interfere in the religious domain also differ in these two types. On the one hand, in restrictive intervention, as exemplified by Turkey, the state intervenes in the religious sphere mainly to restrict the formation of religious groups and practices that might pose a challenge to the secular nation-building project and state authority.[63] This is achieved by placing religion under strict state control and repressing the display of public religiosity. Although religion is used instrumentally to serve the interests of the state as long as it reinforces national identity or mobilizes the population behind nationalist causes as in the case of the Independence war, the state strictly monitors, oversees and supervises the religious domain to make it subservient to the state.

On the other hand, in reformative intervention, as in the case of India, while the state still seeks to keep religion under surveillance, it also pursues social reform through its interventions. State policies seek to actively eliminate and reform religious practices that hinder social and gender equality so that its citizens are freed from oppressive religious practices. While both types of state intervention subordinate religious identities to a predominant national identity, as the examples below will show reformative intervention as practiced in India is more respectful of religious freedoms and the diversity of religious identities present in the public realm. Despite these differences, however, it is noteworthy that in both instances secularism functioned as part of a state

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[62] Gary J. Jacobsohn, *The Wheel of Law: India's Secularism in Comparative Constitutional Context*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 96.
[63] Andrew Davison, *Secularism and Revivalism in Turkey: A Hermeneutic Reconsideration*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998.

apparatus that served the political project of creating a modern, secular nation and implementing the nationalist agenda.

In the cases of both Turkey and India, the TGNA and Indian Constituent Assembly debates were key sites for the establishment of secularism as an important aspect of national identity and a symbol of modernity during the founding years of the respective republics.[64] Although processes of secularization had already started in the 19th-century Ottoman Empire and elements that facilitated the establishment of secularism existed in pre-colonial and colonial India, the decisions taken in the TGNA and the Indian Constituent Assembly constituted the "founding moments" of these secularisms through which the institutional infrastructures of the secular states were inscribed into law.[65] The assembly debates that led to the establishment of the respective secular regimes provide a fruitful site for studying the role of secularism in nation building. In these heated debates, members representing different ideologies and political agendas articulated and defended their reasons for adopting secularism.

Entrusted with the task of establishing the new nation-states, both leaders and assemblies enjoyed immense political authority in the absence of other powerful political and administrative institutions or actors at the national level. The lack of a strong civil society in both settings created a gap between the founding elite and the general public, insulating the founding assemblies from the population to a significant extent. Both

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[64] Srirupa Roy, "Temple and Dam, Fez and Hat: The Secular Roots of Religious Politics in India and Turkey." *Commonwealth & Comparative Politics* 48, no. 2 (2010): 148–172.
[65] See Niyazi Berkes *The Development of Secularism in Turkey* for a discussion of the earlier efforts of secularization during the Ottoman empire and Bhargava in *Secularism and its Critics* on how Hinudu traditions in effect celebrated religious diversity.

projects were in many ways elite driven. [66] However, the Indian Constituent Assembly

was a much more diverse and deliberative body that its Turkish counterpart, which was

primarily concerned with carrying out the secularist agenda of the leader Mustafa Kemal.

This is evident from the lack of debate in the Turkish Assembly. Nonetheless, although

all societal actors did not embrace secularist state policies, the legitimacy of both

assemblies remained undisputed during the early years of the respective republics. [67]

This chapter argues that these founding moments represented critical junctures for

both Turkey and India. A critical juncture is a period of change when political actors

facing multiple choices adopt "a particular institutional arrangement" that "sets into

motion institutional patterns or event chains that have deterministic characteristics."[68]

The founding years of the republics in Turkey and India were critical junctures during

which old patterns of authority defining the state-religion relationship were replaced by

new ones. In the face of a structural opening for change following the nationalist

struggles in their respective societies, both Turkish and Indian nationalist elites

established secular regimes whose institutional contours and ideological legacies are

being challenged in present-day Turkey and India.

As Kathleen Thelen argues, even short of absolute breakdowns or total

reconfigurations, institutions may still be transformed through a variety of mechanisms

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[66] Metin Heper, *The State Tradition in Turkey*. Beverley, North Humberside : Atlantic Highlands, N.J:
Distributed in the U.S.A. by Humanities Press, 1985.

[67] Şerif Mardin, "Center-Periphery Relations: A Key to Turkish Politics?" *Daedalus* 102, no. 1 (1973):
169–90. See Kaviraj, Sudipta. *The Imaginary Institution of India: Politics and Ideas*. New York: Columbia
University Press, 2010 for a discussion of how the Indian reforms were received by the larger population.

[68] James Mahoney and Dietrich Rueschemeyer, *Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences*.
Cambridge Studies in Comparative Politics (Cambridge, U.K. ; New York: Cambridge University Press,
2003), 123.

from one critical juncture to another.[69] Over the past several decades, the meaning of secularism in Turkey and India has been reconstructed and reinterpreted by means of constitutional amendments or legislations and arguably challenged as a result of the rise of religious parties since the period under study in this chapter. However, the decisions taken in the national assemblies during the founding years of the republics shaped public policies and set the parameters of future discussions on secularism. The following sections will discuss the establishment of interventionist secularism in Turkey and India through an analysis of the TGNA, the Indian Constituent Assembly debates and the reforms that followed.

Restrictive Secularism in Turkey: Creating a Turkish National Identity

The rise of religious parties in Turkey has its roots in the reforms undertaken in the late Ottoman period and in the nature of the political transformation following the founding of the Turkish Republic by Mustafa Kemal Ataturk in 1923.[70] Ataturk's reforms did not just sweep away the ruling institutions of the Ottoman Empire but also the idea that the state's legitimacy rested on Islam. His project to transform Turkey into a modern, Western, and secular state was an ambitious project that entailed the transformation of the multi-religious and multi-ethnic Ottoman Empire into a religiously and ethnically homogeneous nation-state.[71] It attempted to achieve the difficult task of making

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[69] Kathleen Thelen, How Institutions Evolve: Insights from Comparative Historical Analysis, in *Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences*. Cambridge Studies in Comparative Politics. (Cambridge, U.K. ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 208.

[70] Metin Heper, "The Ottoman Legacy and Turkish Politics," *Journal of International Affairs* 54, no. 1 (2000): 62-82.

[71] Taner Timur, *Turk Devrimi: Tarihi, Anlami ve Felsefi Temeli* [The Turkish Revolution: Its Historical Meaning and Philosophical Basis] (Ankara: Sevinc Matbasi, 1968), 12.

individuals come to "imagine" themselves as part of a Turkish nation.[72] This was to take place without any inheritance of older cultural meanings, the strongest of which was being Muslim. In other words, the Kemalists sought to create a new Turkish nation-state founded explicitly on ethnic Turkish nationalism by replacing the Islam-oriented values of the Ottoman Empire with secular nationalist values.

While Ataturk and his close associates clearly recognized that Islam was a significant part of Turkish society, they also saw Islam as a traditional force and a source of conservative influence, "superstition" (a word, as I will show, that is often used in the Indian context as part of efforts to reform various Hindu religious practices), false ideas and dogmas that were responsible for Turkey's backwardness and were obstacles to Turkey's achievement of national ideals. The authoritative status that the religion had enjoyed under Ottoman imperialism was seen as problematic, as was the fact that Islamic theology denied the legitimacy of any form of temporal or non-spiritual authority. Checking and countering the strength of Islam as the most formidable contemporary challenger of republican authority thus became crucial to the project of building and securing the strength of the Turkish state.

Unlike other instances of post-imperial state-formation, the Ottoman Empire could not be "sent away" from Turkey. It called for a new set of institutions and power structures. In one of his first acts, Ataturk destroyed the influence and power of the traditional religious class (ulema) within the state administration.[73] Although it had

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[72] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. (Verso, 2006), 31.
[73] Suna Kili, *Ataturk Devrimi: Bir Cagdaslasma Modeli* [The Ataturk Revolution: A Modernization Model], (Istanbul: Turkiye Is Bankasi Kultur Yayinlari, 2000), 268.

already been disempowered by an increasingly secularizing Ottoman state in the areas of law and education, the Kemalists confiscated the ulema's extensive endowment lands, the traditional institutional source of its economic power. [74] Another act, a significant blow to Turkey's Islamic past and its relationship with the Muslim world was the abolishment of the institution of the Caliphate, the supreme religious office of the entire Sunni Muslim world. This deprived Muslims of both its central institution and supreme religious figure, a potent symbol of Islamic identity, power and legitimacy that had existed for more than thirteen hundred years. Even today, the continued absence of the caliphate finds resonance among Islamists movements in the twenty first century. [75]

Moreover, as part of the Kemalist revolution, sweeping cultural reforms were implemented in order to diminish the influence of Islam in society. The Latin alphabet (modified to accommodate Turkish sounds) was introduced in place of Arabic script, and an effort was made to purge the Turkish language of words of Arabic and Persian origin that had entered the language during the Ottoman period. Swiss, French and Italian laws replaced Ottoman ones that had been partly based on religion. The new Republican elite discouraged traditional attire and Western clothing became the new and required norm. Religious schools (medresses) were banned and the education system was secularized.

Unlike the secularizing reforms of the late Ottoman era, which were limited in nature and compatible with the existing practices of Islam, the reforms that were adopted after the establishment of the republic sought to modernize the society by uprooting the Islam-oriented values of the Ottoman Empire in a wholesale fashion and replacing them

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[74] Metin Heper, "The Problem of the Strong State for the Consolidation of Democracy" *Comparative Political Studies* 25 (1992): 169-194.

[75] Ilber Ortayli et al. *Turkler ve Islamiyet* [The Turks and Islam] (Istanbul: Yakamoz Yayinlari, 2008), 73.

with secular nationalism.[76] This, however, does not mean that Islam did not play an important role in the nationalist discourse in the years leading up to the establishment of the republic. In order to rally the more traditional and religiously conservative Anatolian masses behind them, the nationalist leaders made extensive use of Islamic symbols during the independence movement (1916–1919) and framed Turkey's Independence War as "a holy Muslim war" to free the Sultan-Caliph from the "infidel" Western powers.[77]

Even after the independence struggle, a significant faction of the nationalists remained committed to the idea of Turkey as a Muslim society. For example, when the TGNA abolished the Sultanate on November 1, 1922, the institution of the Caliphate remained intact and many deputies continued to view Abdulmecid II as the ceremonial head of the state and "a symbol of opposition".[78] In fact, a movement in defense of the Sultanate-Caliphate as a key symbol of Islamic power for the community of Muslims across the world emerged among Indian Muslims in 1919. Known then as the Khilafat Movement, it gained a lot of attention in 1920-1921 and attracted the support of Mohandas Gandhi, the new leader of the emerging Indian mass-based struggle against colonial subjugation, who was keen to forge an alliance of the subcontinent's Hindus and Muslims against the British Raj.[79]

After the first assembly dissolved itself (1920-1923), the second national

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[76] Kara, İsmail. *Cumhuriyet Türkiyesi'nde Bir Mesele Olarak İslam* (The Issue of Islam in the Turkish Republic) *1*. 7th ed. Dergah Yayınları, 2016.

[77] Erik J. Zürcher, *The Young Turk Legacy and Nation Building: From the Ottoman Empire to Atatürk's Turkey*. London ; New York : New York: I.B.Tauris, 2010. See also Toprak, Binnaz. *Islam and Political Development in Turkey*. BRILL, 1981.

[78] Hamza Eroğlu, *Türk İnkılap Tarihi*. (History of the Turkish Revolutions) 4th ed. Savaş Yayınları, 2010.

[79] See Minault, Gail. *The Khilafat Movement: Religious Symbolism and Political Mobilization in India*. Columbia University Press, 1982 for the most detailed account of this movement.

assembly declared Turkey a Republic on October 23, 1923 and elected Ataturk its president. In contrast with the first assembly, in which power struggles persisted among the Kemalists and religious conservatives and objections were raised regarding the concentration of power in the hands of the Commander in Chief and the violation of basic rights, during the second assembly the Kemalists formed the People's Party and were able to silence dissenting voices.[80] Once the opposition had been sidelined, Ataturk and his allies were able to follow their agenda of subordinating religion to nationalism with greater ease. They did this by implementing a number of reform laws that relegated religious matters to the private sphere and placed religious institutions under strict state control.

One of the quintessential acts of the secularizing state was the decision taken by the TGNA on March 3, 1924, to abolish the Caliphate and the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Charitable Foundation (Seriye ve Evkaf Vekaleti). However, far from ending the regime's interest in institutionalized religion, this act was accompanied by the creation of a new office, the Directorate of Religious Affairs, an administrative body attached to the office of the prime minister whose head was to be appointed by the President and functions included, in the words of the law that created it, "the dispatch of cases related to belief and ritual, administration of mosques and tekkes (religious lodges)."[81]

The sweeping mandate of this institution basically included administrative

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[80] Ahmet Demirel, *Birinci Mecliste Muhalefet (İkinci Grup)* (Opposition in the First Parliamnet). 7th ed. İletişim Yayınları, 2015.

[81] Andrew Davison, *Secularism and Revivalism in Turkey: A Hermeneutic Reconsideration*. (New Haven; Milton Keynes UK: Yale University Press Lightning Source UK, 2013), 91.

oversight over all mosques in the country and supervision of the appointment and dismissal procedures of all imams (head clerics and prayer leaders of mosques) and hatips (ordained preachers across Turkey.)[82] The law also assigned the Directorate the responsibility of distributing "model" sermons, and translating, editing and publishing authentic religious works for the public. The Directorate of Religious Affairs became the primary institution through which the TGNA interfered in religion and remains a powerful bureaucratic agency in present-day Turkey. In the words of the Turkish scholar Binnaz Toprak, "the organization and personnel of Islam became paid employees of the state.[83] This provided an important mechanism for the state to be able to control and supervise religion in modern Turkey and stands in striking contrast to the relationship between religion and state in the Western context.

Ataturk explained retrospectively in his 1927 address to the Turkish youth that the abolition of the Caliphate was "indispensible" for "securing the revival of the Islamic faith, and disengaging it from the condition of being a political instrument, which it had been for centuries through habit."[84] Abolishing the caliphate constituted the first step toward the separation of religion and state, which in turn would banish Islam from the political realm and prevent its utilization as a political tool. As the proposal establishing the Directorate stated, the interference of religion in political matters led to many "inconveniences"; this was a reality "accepted by all civilized nations and governments as a basic principle."[85]

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[82] Gözaydın, İstar B. "Diyanet and Politics." *The Muslim World* 98, no. 2–3 (2008): 216–27.
[83] Toprak, Binnaz. *Islam and Political Development in Turkey*. Brill, 1981.
[84] "Öğrenciler İçin Gençliğe Hitabe" (Ataturk's Address to the Yotuh) D&R, 1927.
[85] Gözaydın, Istar B. "Diyanet and Politics." *The Muslim World* 98, no. 2–3 (2008): 216–27.

When the issue was discussed in the People's Party group meeting on March 2, 1924, some opposed it rigorously. For instance, Musa Kazım Efendi from Konya claimed that it would be "inappropriate" to abolish the Ministry because Islam was a religion that concerned itself "both with worldly and non-worldly affairs" including "administrative issues, faith, and morality." [86] Another deputy, Abdullah Azmi Efendi from Eskisehir, maintained that separating religion from worldly affairs was a practice born in Europe to escape the tyranny of the Church. According to him, this principle did not need to apply to Islam because Islam as a religion differed from Christianity in important respects.[87] Against these arguments, Recep Bey from Kutahya claimed that even if the Ministry were abolished, it would not take away anything from the "spirituality" and the "integrity" of their religion.[88]

As can be seen from the discussion above, rather than mutual nonintervention, the establishment of the Directorate was based on a view of secularism that allowed the state to assert its control over religious matters, exemplifying the type of restrictive secularism that aims to nationalize and control the kind of religiosity that will be tolerated in the public sphere. As part of this strategy, in his speeches Ataturk distinguished between an Islam "more complicated, artificial and consisting of superstitions, and one that does not oppose consciousness or preclude progress."[89] By portraying the latter type of Islam as mild and rationalist, he employed this version of Islam to promote the ideas and policies of the secular state on issues such as modern education and gender equality.

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[86] Gozaydin, Istar. *Diyanet - Turkiye Cumhuriyeti'nde Dinin Tanzimi*. (The Directorate: Regulation of Religion in the Turkish Republic) İstanbul: Iletisim Yayincilik, 2009), 23.
[87] Ibid, *Diyanet - Turkiye Cumhuriyeti'nde Dinin Tanzimi, 60.*
[88] Ibid, *Diyanet - Turkiye Cumhuriyeti'nde Dinin Tanzimi, 72.*
[89] Suna Kili, *Ataturk Devrimi: Bir Cagdaslasma Modeli* [The Ataturk Revolution: A Modernization Model], (Istanbul: Turkiye Is Bankasi Kultur Yayinlari, 2000), 268.

The aim of Ataturk and his entourage was not to make nonbelievers out of Turkish citizens, but to ensure that they prayed in Turkish, that their clerics were trained and paid by the state, that the designs for their mosques originated in state-made blueprints, and that they discarded the "bad" aspects of their religion (such as polygamy) and continued to embrace the "good" (Ramadan observance and Eid celebrations).[90] As a result, the Directorate has played an important role in controlling the Islamic domain ever since its establishment, by placing the religious apparatus including all the imams, mosques and Quran courses under state control. Paradoxically, although initially established to regulate Islamic services, the Directorate has been used as a means of "securing" the secular nature of the state in Turkey for over 80 years.[91]

More importantly, the religious belief promoted by the interventionist secularism of the Turkish state is much closer to the Sunni tradition. As Istar Gozaydin, a Turkish scholar who studies the role of the Directorate in Turkish politics, notes, the Directorate of Religious Affairs and its officers or spokespersons have often tended to display hostility towards religious minorities in Turkey such as *Alevi* and Shi'ite citizens. The official position of the Directorate is that Alevis and Sunnis are not subject to discrimination because, except for certain local customs and beliefs, there are no differences between these two sects as to basic religious issues; which is even more offensive to religious sects within Islam as it indicates a denial of any separate "Alevi'" religious identity. The denial of a distinct Alevi identity and the failure to support the sites of worship for Alevis has been another crucial way in which the Directorate has

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[90] Roy, Srirupa. "Temple and Dam, Fez and Hat: The Secular Roots of Religious Politics in India and Turkey." *Commonwealth & Comparative Politics* 48, no. 2 (2010): 148–172.
[91] Gozaydin, Istar. *Diyanet - Turkiye Cumhuriyeti'nde Dinin Tanzimi*. İstanbul: Iletisim Yayincilik, 2009.

controlled the religious groups and the narrative surrounding them.

The Directorate of Religious Affairs even allows mosques to be built in Alevi villages, which appears to be a part of larger strategy by the Turkish state to impose Sunni belief in these communities.[92] The parallels between the Turkish states' discrimination against Alevis, in particular under the AKP, and the BJP's attitude towards its Muslim citizens are striking and will be discussed further in the following chapters. It is suffice to say here that both are political parties, which subscribe to a concept of national identity built on a political ideology of religious majoritarianism, providing support and recognition to some but not all religions.

Similar to the establishment of the Directorate of Religious Affairs, the abolition of sects and Sufi orders also aimed to determine the kind of religiosity that would be tolerated in the public sphere. The political elite felt increasingly threatened by these institutions, especially following a series of revolts that began with the Seyh Sait uprising in the east in 1925, which was basically an ethnic Kurdish rebellion with religious undertones.[93] On November 30, 1925, the parliament dissolved all Sufi orders and closed down local and central dervish lodges.[94] One of these orders, the Naksibendi order later referred to as the Gulen movement would come to play an important role in the Islamic movement of the 1970's and the subsequent rise of the AKP. Following this attack on Anatolian folk Islam, members of these orders were not allowed to gather for ceremonies or meetings and their assets were confiscated by the state. Most TGNA deputies claimed

[92] Istar Gözaydın, "Diyanet and Politics." *The Muslim World* 98, no. 2–3 (2008): 216–27.
[93] Suna Kili, *Ataturk Devrimi: Bir Cagdaslasma Modeli* [The Ataturk Revolution: A Modernization Model], (Istanbul: Turkiye Is Bankasi Kultur Yayinlari, 2000), 268.
[94] Hakan M. Yavuz, *Islamic Political Identity in Turkey*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 20050, 47.

"the lodges and orders had become places of "disturbance" and were afflicting the nation with factionalism."[95] According to these deputies, the Sufi orders were "politically damaging" and had a negative effect on the "general well-being of the nation."[96] Others argued that the orders represented and promoted a pre-Islamic belief system and, unlike the teachings of Islam, encouraged "passivity" instead of creating active citizens.[97]

Since the Islamic orders caused sectarianism, it was argued, they stood in the way of creating a uniform Turkish national identity.[98] It is interesting to note that this debate has been very much revived following the fall out between the Gülen movement and the AKP in Turkey. At the time, because the lodges and orders had become associated with tradition and backwardness, their abolishment in Ataturk's own words was necessary to prove that the Turkish nation "as a whole was no primitive nation, filled with superstitions and prejudices."[99] As in the case of the abolition of the Caliphate, deputies were careful not to take a hostile stance toward Islam in the assembly discussions on Islamic sects. Instead, they framed their arguments by associating these Islamic organizations with primitive superstitions, which they claimed contradicted Islam in the first place. According to the assembly members, their abolition would allow "true" Islam or "cagdas (modern) Islam" to come to the fore. It is interesting to note that similar arguments were made by activist Indian judges when making rulings on the exclusionary

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[95] *Türk Parlamento tarihi TBMM 1. Donem* (Turkish Parliamentary history: The National Struggle and the First National Assembly 1920-1923) Ankara: TBMM Basımevi Müdürlüğü, Türk Parlamento Tarihi Araştırma Grubu, 1995.
[96] Ibid, TBMM tarihi II:3–7.
[97] İsmail Kara, *Cumhuriyet Türkiyesi'nde Bir Mesele Olarak İslam 1*. 7th ed. (Dergah Yayınları, 2016) 239.
[98] Yavuz, M. Hakan. *Islamic Political Identity in Turkey*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.
[99] *Türk Parlamento tarihi TBMM 1. Donem* (Turkish Parliamentary history: The National Struggle and the First National Assembly 1920-1923) Ankara: TBMM Basımevi Müdürlüğü, Türk Parlamento Tarihi Araştırma Grubu, 1995.

policies of various Hindu sects towards untouchables.[100]

The TGNA adopted other reforms that removed religious institutions and symbols from the legal, educational, and cultural realms and replaced them with secular ones, further illustrating the interventionist powers of state secularism in Turkey. For instance, consolidating all scientific and educational institutions under a newly established Ministry of Education, "the Law on the Unification of Education" closed down all religious schools and secularized the education system. Moreover, on February 17, 1926, the TGNA abolished *sharia* (Islamic law) and adopted the Swiss civil code, which secularized, and to a great extent codified, family and divorce law. When the civil code was discussed in the National Assembly, most deputies agreed with the rationale that it would advance Turkey to "the league of civilized states."[101]

Finally, to ensure that a state sanctioned version of religion would complement the secular-nationalist project, the Turkish state, for most of the republican era strictly supervised the content of religious knowledge by administering the various Quran courses, by determining the content of compulsory religious instruction courses, and by regulating the controversial *imam-hatip* vocational schools. Despite the unification and secularization of education in 1924, which closed all the medreses (traditional theological seminaries), the TGNA did establish a limited number of *imam-hatip* schools for the training of religious officials, such as preachers and imams. It also founded a faculty of divinity within Istanbul University for educating religious experts at the university

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[100] Gary J. Jacobsohn, *The Wheel of Law: India's Secularism in Comparative Constitutional Context*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 34.
[101] Turkish Grand National Assembly Debates, Volume 2, No. 4, 62.

level.[102]

The intended goal of these educational institutions was to train clerics that would endorse the state propagated version of Islam, rally support for the Republican establishment's policies and not stray from the secularist principles of the state. In certain mosques, even the content of Friday sermons were strictly monitored by state officials. As restrictive secularist intervention would suggest the Ministry of Education remained in charge of designing the content of religious instruction and disseminated Islamic knowledge based on Sunni traditions imbued with nationalist tendencies.[103] In short, the Turkish state took control of religious education and promoted the uniformity of Islamic practices to further the project of creating a "homogeneous society based on a monolithic national identity."

The attitude of the Turkish state toward religion has wavered throughout the Republican era. While Kemalist political parties have generally adopted restrictive policies toward religion, center right and Islamist parties tended to favor policies that advocated a relaxation of these policies. The major battle ground between secularist and Islamist forces has been on the realm of religion's role in the public sphere, more specifically on the issue of lifting the ban on headscarves in public institutions and allowing for imamhatip students to be admitted into universities. However, despite their differing sets of goals, by gradually strengthening the institutional power of the Directorate of Religious Affairs and regulating religious education, both secular and Islamist governments have sought to exercise control over the production of religious

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[102] Istar Gozaydin, *Diyanet - Turkiye Cumhuriyeti'nde Dinin Tanzimi*. İstanbul: Iletisim Yayincilik, 2009.
[103] M. Hakan Yavuz. *Islamic Political Identity in Turkey*. Religion and Global Politics. (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 122.

knowledge and more importantly prioritized Sunni Islam over other Islamic and non-Islamic sects.[104] In the following section, I will argue that Indian secularism also allowed for the state to interfere in the religious domain. However, rather than placing religion under state control with the goal of creating a uniform ethno-religious national identity, the Indian state often used its secularism as a tool to reform the discriminatory practices embedded in oppressive religious traditions.

Reformative Secularism in India: Social Reform of Caste-based Identities

The Indian anti-colonial nationalist movement ended with the partition of the British Indian Empire into India and Pakistan as two separate states in August of 1947. Five hundred thousand people were killed during Partition and more than twelve million displaced. The violence had put the entire society on edge, not least the 24 million Muslims who had decided to stay in India. Hindu nationalists, moreover, actively campaigned against the secular project and opposed any effort to ensure minority rights. The adoption of secularism in India therefore has to be contextualized not only within the framework of India's colonial past but also against the trauma of partition, which inscribed the potential consequences of politicizing religion into collective consciousness. The desire to distinguish India from Pakistan, as well as from the colonial government, partly explains the absolute centrality given to secularism and the secular state in official Indian discourse after independence, in contrast to the rare use of these terms in the discourse of the movement for independence.[105] It is noteworthy that ever since the

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[104] Umit Cizre Sakallioglu, "Parameters and Strategies of Islam-State Interaction in Republican Turkey." *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 28, no. 2 (1996): 231–51.
[105] B. Shiva Rao. *The Framing Of India's Constitution A Study*. Indian Institute of Public Administration, 1968.

founding of the Indian republic, official discourse as well as popular cultural representation of the Indian-Pakistani relationship has strongly emphasized India's superior treatment of minorities as its mark of "national distinction."[106]

Perceiving secularism as a "holding mechanism" capable of bringing the various religious and ethnic communities together, the Indian nationalist elites employed it to formulate a national identity out of these "fragmented" and "polarized" identities and establish unity among them.[107] Thus, according to the debates during the Assembly, secularism would ensure that India's "diverse races, colors, creeds, languages and culture" could be "molded into one Nation that will work together for the good of the common whole." [108] Moreover, through its existence as a secular state that provided equal treatment and protection to all religions, particularly to minorities, the Indian state could take pride in its representative character and could consequently assert its difference from its (non-representative) colonial predecessor. One of Nehru's most famous sayings was to build a nation in which "minorities could feel at home."[109]

During the founding period, the Hindu nationalist opposition did not succeed in large measure thanks to Nehru's efforts to counter both the discourse and the activities of communalist organizations, as will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter. Nehru and his supporters made extensive use of radio and public forums to promote religious tolerance and consistently portray inter-communal harmony as a core value of the

[106] Srirupa Roy, "Temple and Dam, Fez and Hat: The Secular Roots of Religious Politics in India and Turkey." *Commonwealth & Comparative Politics* 48, no. 2 (2010): 148–172.

[107] Neera Chandkoke, Representing the secular agenda for India in *Will Secular India Survive*. eds Hasan, Mushirul (Gurgaon, Haryana: Imprint One, 2004), 50-53.

[108] CAD VII:327.

[109] B. Shiva Rao, *The Framing Of India's Constitution A Study*. (Indian Institute of Public Administration, 1968), 43.

Congress Party. Nehru also did not hesitate to use state power to constrain Hindu communalists. For example, he prevented an effort in 1949 to politicize a dispute over the Babri Mosque in Ayodyha, which Hindu naitonalists claimed was built on the birthplace of the Hindu god Rama, by preemptively arresting members of the Mahashabha and others involved in the agitations.[110]

As Prime Minister, Nehru also faced opposition from Hindu traditionalists in his own party. The traditionalist faction was sympathetic to the Hindu communalists and their call for a more explicit link between religion and national identity. Although Nehru was intent on creating a society that protected minority rights, the traditionalists argued that the new government ought to be more concerned about the wishes of the Hindu majority. Sardar Patel, the home minister, noted that if Congress were to adopt a more Hindu approach to these questions, it would be able to gain the support of activists both in the Mahashaba and the RSS. In a 1948 speech, Patel laid out these views, arguing that the Hindu nationalists were an important constituency that could and should be absorbed into the Congress Party.[111]

Nonetheless, Nehruvian secular nationalists triumphed during the Constituent Assembly debates and so the Indian constitution makes clear that the state's identity is not based or derived from religion and is independent of any particular faith. Article 15 states "the state shall not discriminate against any citizen on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth" and articles 25-28 of the Constitution formulate secularism as equal respect for all religions. However, it does vest immense powers with the state to

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[110] Amales Tripathi, *Indian National Congress and the Struggle for Freedom, 1885-1947.* (New Delhi, India: Oxford University Press, 2014), 239.
[111] Scott W. Hibbard, *Religious Politics and Secular States: Egypt, India, and the United States.* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), 32.

regulate religious affairs.[112] For example, Article 25 (1) of the Indian Constitution states that "all persons are equally entitled to freedom of conscience and the right freely to profess, practice and propagate religion" but "subject to public order, morality and health" as implicitly defined by state authorities.[113] It is instructive that during the sub-committee debates on the draft of this article some members expressed concerns in view of the interpretation that might be given to the word "religion" and that this clause might have the effect of invalidating all existing social reform legislation as well as prohibiting such legislation for the future.

During the debate on the religious freedoms article, one of the members of the Assembly, Alladi Krishnasawami even drew attention to the discussion of a Jehovah's Witness case reviewed by the Australian Supreme Court in which the Chief Justice remarked: "In all periods of history there have been religions which have sanctioned practices regarded by large numbers of people as essentially evil and wicked and the complete protection of religious beliefs might result in the disappearance of organized society."[114] Two women members once again emphasized that it was important that the wording of the clause in the Indian constitution did not render impossible the enactment of future legislation for eradicating several customs such as child marriage, polygamy, and unequal laws of inheritance practiced in the name of religion. They therefore suggested that the freedom envisioned in the clause should be restricted to "religious worship" in place of the much wider concept of the practice of religion. In short, the

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[112] Srirupa Roy, "Temple and Dam, Fez and Hat: The Secular Roots of Religious Politics in India and Turkey." *Commonwealth & Comparative Politics* 48, no. 2 (2010): 148–172.
[113] B. Shiva Rao, *The Framing Of India's Constitution A Study*. (Indian Institute of Public Administration, 19680, 43.
[114] CAD VII: 261.

members were very much concerned with making sure the articles on religions freedom did not prevent the state from carrying out its reformist agenda.

Article 25 (2) lays out those other provisions:

"Nothing in this article shall affect the operation of any existing law or prevent the state from making any law a) regulating or restricting any economic, financial, political or other secular activity which may be associated with religious practice b) providing for social welfare and reform or the throwing open of Hindu religious institutions of a public character to all classes and sections of Hindus."

This article makes clear that the Indian Constitution seeks a transformation of the social conditions of people long burdened by the inequities of religiously based hierarchies. Article 26 also states that it is "the right of every religious denomination or any section thereof … to manage its own affairs in matters of religion", provided it is "subject to public order, morality and health" as interpreted by the state. The Indian state put these open ended, self assigned powers of intervention in religious matters to extensive use as early as the mid-1950's, when the national parliament enacted a set of legislation that codified Hindu personal and family laws on marriage, divorce, inheritance and adoption with the explicit objective of progressive reform, especially regarding the rights of women.[115] The state also intervened on a large scale to combat and curb the most discriminatory outcomes of the cast based social order, such as opening up access to Hindu temples and shrines to so called untouchables, referred to in contemporary India as Dalits, or the oppressed, they compromise one-sixth of India's population, as well as to

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[115] Gary J. Jacobsohn, *The Wheel of Law: India's Secularism in Comparative Constitutional Context.* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 33.

supervise and regulate the administration and endowments of Hindu religious bodies.[116]

The Indian Constituent Assembly, the body responsible for writing the constitution of India as a sovereign democratic republic, was the vehicle the founding elite used to shape the institutional framework of Indian secularism. Although the Assembly was mostly composed of members of the Indian National Congress (led by Jawaharlal Nehru, the "founder" of India who was committed to promoting the official ideology of secular nationalism throughout his life), the Muslim League, which held most of the reserved seats for Muslims, and smaller parties were also represented. Moreover, as mentioned above, in the early years, the Congress itself represented a wide range of communities and ideologies, from Nehruvian secular nationalists to Hindu traditionalists and socialists to Marxists. The diversity of the party was further increased as it invited non-Congress members to the Assembly, such as representatives of minority communities and the Hindu Mahasabha, the Hindu nationalist party.[117] This stood in stark contrast to the composition of the Turkish Assembly in the early years, which was dominated by Kemalists. The Indian Assembly debates were therefore much more deliberative and required the different groups represented in the Assembly to participate in the give and take of politics and reach some sort of compromise.

For the most part, assembly discussions on the subject of secularism revolved around two major issues. The first concerned the institutional framework for separating the religious and the political realms from each other. The positions spelt out on secularism during these debates fall into two categories. Some members defined

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[116] Hasan Mushirul, ed. *Will Secular India Survive*. Gurgaon, Haryana: Imprint One, 2004.

[117] B. Shiva Rao, *The Framing Of India's Constitution A Study*. Indian Institute of Public Administration, 1968.

separation as the "mutual exclusion" of religion and the state whereby religion would be strictly confined to the private sphere. However, the dominant view in the Assembly defined separation as "equal-respect" and "non-preferential" treatment of all religions, emphasizing that secularism did not imply state antagonism towards religion.[118]

Most arguments revolved around the idea that a secular state, was not a state that denied the importance of religious faith or sought to inculcate skepticism about religious belief. Rather, secularism was most commonly constructed as implying that the state would not identify with, or give preference to, any particular religion. This was exemplified in the lengthy debates surrounding Article 27, for example, which stated that "no religious instruction be provided in any educational institution wholly maintained out of State funds."[119] Members such as Hussain Imam and Hriday Nath Kunzru emphasized that while there was no bar to any community maintaining its own educational institutions, if such an institution wanted state aid it must throw open its doors to members of all classes of persons irrespective of their religion, community and language. This understanding of separation, Bhargava famously argues, conceptualized separation as "equidistance" and maintained that the state may "help or hinder all religions to an equal degree" to ensure neutrality.

During the assembly debates on the constitutional articles pertaining to religious freedoms (Articles 25–28) and the cultural and educational rights of minorities (Articles 29–30), Constituent Assembly members referred to both views of separation. Those who

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[118] Shefali Jha, "Secularism in the Constituent Assembly Debates, 1946-1950." *Economic and Political Weekly* 37, no. 30 (2002): 3175–3180. See also Rochana Bajpai. "Constituent Assembly Debates and Minority Rights." *Economic and Political Weekly* 35, no. 21/22 (2000): 1837–1845.
[119] Rajeev Bhargava, *The Promise of India's Secular Democracy*. (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2010) 39.

advocated for the mutual exclusion of religion and the state maintained that religion was

a private matter and that "with the actual profession of faith or belief, the State should

have no concern."[120] Supporters of this view followed the arguments of classical

secularization theorists and predicted the gradual weakening of religion and its

replacement with nationalism. As S. Radhakrishnan, who later became the first vice-

president and the second president of India, said in an Assembly session on January 20,

1947, (interesting to note that he mentions Turkey here):

> "The present tendency is for larger and larger aggregations. Look at what has happened in America, in Canada, in Switzerland. Egypt wishes to be connected with Sudan, South Ireland wishes to be connected with North Ireland. Nationalism, not religion, is the basis of modern life. Allenby's liberating campaigns in Egypt, Lawrence's adventures in Arabia, Kemal Pasha's defiant creation of a secular Turkey, point out that the days of religious States are over. These are the days of nationalism"[121]

> According to Radhakrishnan and some other Assembly members, the goal of the

Constituent Assembly was to develop "a homogeneous, democratic, secular State."[122]

Such views were also typical of the modernizing nationalist elite of the period,

exemplified most importantly by Nehru himself. Many members declared that the need of

the hour was to strengthen the identity of Indians as citizens of the Indian state, as

opposed to being members of some community or religious group. During the debates,

proponents of a secular state, would point to Pakistan as a "religious state" in order to

deter members of embracing religion more openly during this time.[123]

> There were even some members who demanded the insertion of an article

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[120] CAD VII: 816.
[121] B. Shiva Rao, *The Framing Of India's Constitution A Study*. Indian Institute of Public Administration, 1968), 16.
[122] CAD V: 283
[123] CAD V: 339.

separating the state from any religious activity. Such an article would begin as: "The state in India being secular shall have no concern with any religion, creed or profession of faith." For example Tajamul Hussein, although he did not get his way, not only wanted to define the right to religion as a right to practice religion privately, but also insisted that religious instruction was to be given only at home by one's parents and not in any educational institution.[124] He also wanted to include the following clause in the constitution: "No person shall have any visible sign, mark or name, and no person shall wear any dress whereby his religion may be recognized." This conception of mutual exclusion echoes some of the views held by the Turkish elite and Mustafa Kemal himself during the early Republican period. Not surprisingly, it was also one of the underlying motivations behind the Hat Law promulgated in 1925, which banned the wearing of the Ottoman fez and replaced it with the Western style hat.

Secularism, in this mutual exclusion of religion and state sense, did not pertain to matters of religion alone. It referred more generally to the "elimination of caste and religious groups as categories of public policy and as actors in public life."[125] One example of this strand of secular, liberal nationalism was the popular clause: "irrespective of caste, creed, race or community." According to this ideal, nation building required the creation of a new secular ethos, which would induce people to stop seeing themselves as part of this or that community and to regard themselves as Indians first and last, an ethos which would render ascriptive affiliations of any kind irrelevant in the political domain.

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[124] Jha Shefali, "Secularism in the Constituent Assembly Debates, 1946-1950." *Economic and Political Weekly* 37, no. 30 (2002): 3175–3180.
[125] Srirupa Roy, "Temple and Dam, Fez and Hat: The Secular Roots of Religious Politics in India and Turkey." *Commonwealth & Comparative Politics* 48, no. 2 (2010): 148–172.

Other members who advocated an understanding of separation as equal-respect in turn claimed that a secular state was not necessarily anti-religious. The equal respect theory held that in a society like India, where religion was such an important part of people's lives, this principle entailed not that the state stay away from religions equally, but that it respects all religions alike. One of the main proponents of this view, K M Munshi, proclaimed that the non-establishment clause (of the U.S. Constitution) was inappropriate to Indian conditions and that Indians had to develop a characteristically Indian secularism. "We are a people with deeply religious moorings and a living tradition of religious tolerance. In view of this situation, a rigid line could not be drawn between the state and the Church as in the U.S."[126]

Although these members acknowledged that "a secular State may not allow religion to play a very important part to the exclusion of other activities of the State," they maintained that rather than "banning" or "despising" it, the state should remain "perfectly neutral" toward all religions.[127] This meant that the state would respect and treat all religions equally and provide "equal right and facilities" to every religious community in India.[128] These differing positions on secularism clashed constantly during the debates in the Constituent Assembly.[129]

In addition to the precise formulation of the institutional separation of religion and the state, another major point of contention about secularism concerned the degree to which the state should intervene in the religious domain for promoting "social welfare

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[126] Shefali Jha, "Secularism in the Constituent Assembly Debates, 1946-1950." *Economic and Political Weekly* 37, no. 30 (2002): 3175–3180.
[127] CAD VII:348, 879.
[128] CAD VII:832.
[129] Rajeev Bhargava, *The Promise of India's Secular Democracy*. (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2010), 35-36.

and reform." This was the major way in which Indian secularism differed from the

secularism of the Turkish state, which is why I refer to it as "reformative secularism." For

example, religious traditions oppressing minority groups such as women and

untouchables made Assembly members cautious about community rights and prompted

them to advocate the state's right to intervene in the religious domain to emancipate these

groups. In a letter to the Chair of the Committee on Fundamental Rights, as the clause on

the free exercise of religion was being debated Alladi Krishnaswami wrote:

> "Many religions involve the idea of sacrifice, sometimes in the form of human sacrifice or polygamy. The practice of suttee, involving the immolation of the widow upon the funeral pyre of her husband, was for centuries a part of the Hindu religion. Can any person, by describing his beliefs and practices as religious exempt himself from obedience to the law?"[130]

These statements reflect the concern with reforming various religious practices

that are considered to be in conflict with basic individual rights. In another similar letter,

Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, a female member of the Assembly, stated:

> "As we are all aware there are several customs practiced in the name of religion, e.g., *pardah,* child marriage, polygamy, unequal laws of inheritance, prevention of inter-caste marriages, dedication of girls to temples. We are naturally anxious that no clause in any fundamental right shall make impossible future legislation for the purpose of wiping out these evils."[131]

Thus, rather than placing religion under state control as in the case of Turkey, the

banning of certain religious customs and practices was advocated as a means of

promoting "social welfare and reform." In a sense, the Indian state assumed responsibility

for determining the aspects of religion that merited preservation, and the ones that could

be discarded or "reformed." To prevent discrimination based on caste, many in the

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[130] B. Shiva Rao. *The Framing Of India's Constitution A Study*. Indian Institute of Public Administration, 1968), 146.
[131] Ibid, *The Framing Of India's Constitution A Study*, p.148.

Assembly thought it was necessary to force the state to open all public Hindu religious institutions to "any class or section of Hindus" (Article 25 [2b]). This was followed by a series of landmark judgments delivered by the Indian Supreme Court in the 1960's, which distinguished between the essential and non-essential aspects of Hindu belief and practice, holding that the practice of discriminating against untouchable casts and denying them entry to a temple was a corruption of the truth of Hindusim.[132] Similarly, the article abolishing untouchability of the Constitution (Article 17) "the great social evil which had long been a shame and a disgrace to Indians" was readily accepted because it would bring "fairness and justice to the millions of untouchables."[133]

Uniform Civil Code

Long before the 1990's when the adoption of a uniform civil code became one of the core demands of the Hindu nationalist agenda, the question of a uniform civil code had been one of the most contentious issues confronting the Constituent Assembly. While criminal and procedural law had been codified under the British, the personal laws of religious communities regulating matters such as marriage, divorce, and inheritance were left intact in colonial India. Even though colonial rulers justified this policy as a sign of respect for the religious and cultural traditions of India, it was more obviously part of their strategy to spread communalism, sow interreligious discord and thereby divide and rule.

What was most important for the future of the newly established Indian state was

[132] Sririupa Roy, "Temple and Dam, Fez and Hat: The Secular Roots of Religious Politics in India and Turkey." *Commonwealth & Comparative Politics* 48, no. 2 (2010): 148–172.
[133] CAD II: 665

that these laws legitimized religious practices that led to serious social discrimination. Therefore, some Assembly members proposed a uniform civil code that would apply to all Indians regardless of religion, caste, and tribe to overcome these inequalities. This sentiment was summarized in Rajkumari Amrut Kamur speech in the Assembly: "one of the factors that has kept India back from advancing to nationhood has been the existence of personal laws based on religion which keep the nation divided into watertight compartments in many aspects of private life."[134]

The biggest objection to the uniform civil code, not surprisingly, came from Muslim representatives, who opposed it on the grounds that it would interfere with their religious practices. During the debates at the Constituent Assembly, Indian Muslims argued that "their laws of succession, inheritance, marriage, and divorce were completely dependent upon their religion," and they contended that a uniform civil code "cannot be imposed on a community which insists that their religious tenets should be observed."[135] Fearful of having to change the "laws they had been observing for generations, which they saw as way of life," Muslim representatives insisted that the imposition of a uniform law would amount to "tyranny." [136] They became strong proponents of an interpretation of a secular state that allowed them to practice their religion freely which meant preserving their own personal laws.

Others, most notably B. R. Ambedkar, the leader of the scheduled castes and the chief architect of the Indian Constitution, and even the Hindu traditionalist K. M.

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[134] Rochana Bajpai. "Constituent Assembly Debates and Minority Rights." *Economic and Political Weekly* 35, no. 21/22 (2000): 1837–1845.
[135] CAD VII:543.
[136] CAD VII:544.

Munshi, strongly argued in favor a uniform civil code.[137] Ambedkar famously stated:

> "There is nothing extraordinary in saying that we ought to strive hereafter to limit the definition of religion in such a manner that we shall not extend it beyond beliefs and such rituals as may be connected with ceremonials which are essentially religious… I do not see why religion should be given this vast, expansive jurisdiction so as to cover the whole of life and to prevent the legislature from encroaching upon that field."

He ends by asking: "After all what are we having this liberty for? We are having this liberty to reform our social system, which is so full of inequalities, discrimination and other things which conflict with our fundamental rights."[138] This statement captures the essence of the "reformative secularism" practiced by the Indian state in subsequent years. The Indian Constitutional Court also took up the issue of what in religion is essential, and what is not by referring to this statement made by Ambedkar. In a similar fashion, Munshi claimed that it was necessary "to divorce religion from personal law" and "consolidate and unify India's personal law in such a way that the way of life of the whole country may in course of time be unified and secular."[139] At the end, although the proposal for a uniform civil code was not accepted, it was endorsed as "an ultimate social objective" and a clause was inserted in the Constitution stating "the State shall endeavor to secure for the citizens a uniform civil code."[140]

On a slightly different note, the ambitious project of the codification of Hindu personal and family laws was ultimately brought to fruition in 1955-1956 when India's parliament enacted four pieces of legislation: the Hindu Marriage Act, the Hindu Succession Act, the Hindu Minority and Guardianship Act, and the Hindu Adoptions and

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[137] CAD VII:548
[138] Christoph Jaffrelot, "Composite Culture is not multiculturalism" in Varshney, Ashutosh, ed. *India and the Politics of Developing Countries: Essays in Memory of Myron Weiner.* 1 edition. (New Delhi ; Thousand Oaks, Calif: SAGE Publications Pvt. Ltd, 2004), 144.
[139] CAD VII:547
[140] CAD VII:550

Maintenance Act (there was also a Special Marriage Act, passed in 1954, which liberalized provisions for interfaith marriage of a colonial-era law.)[141] Prior to this "Hindu" laws governing such matters existed and were applied in diverse and often conflicting forms in different parts of India. The reforms intended to end this fragmentation and secure the rights of women, who were denied recognition, or equality in most of the commonly used versions of the law. The Turkish civil code of 1926 had very similar provisions, and consequences for women's status and rights as the Indian reforms three decades later. It prohibited polygamy, made the legality of marriage subject to a civil contract between the parties executed by a state official authorized to do so, made divorce obtainable only through a secular court of law and the participation of both parties in the proceedings, gave equal rights to women in inheritance and succession, and recognized a mother's equal rights in guardianship of children.[142] The most salient issues in the Indian context were intercaste marriage, divorce and prohibition of polygamy.

There were strong and impassioned voices on both sides of the issue. In his presidential address in October 1951, Nehru observed that: "the Hindu Code Bill, which has given rise to so much argument had become a symbol of the conflict between progress and reaction in the social domain." Sounding almost like the Mustafa Kemal of the 1920's he praised the spirit underlying the Bill: "a spirit of liberation and of freeing our people and especially, our womenfolk, from outworn customs and shackles."[143] On the other hand, N.C. Chatterjee, a Hindu nationalist MP, gave a powerful speech on

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[141] Mushirul Hasan, ed. *Will Secular India Survive* (Gurgaon, Haryana: Imprint One, 2004), 58.
[142] Hamza Eroğlu, *Türk İnkılap Tarihi*.(The History of the Turkish Cultural Revolution) 4th ed. (Savaş Yayınları, 2010), 45.
[143] Bipan Chandra, Aditya Mukherjee, and Mridula Mukherjee. *India Since Independence*. Penguin Books India, 2008.

Hindu marriage as "an inviolable union, an eternal fellowship" and appealed to parliament not to tamper with it and introduce divorce into it.[144]

In addition to the defense of Hindu traditions, the Hindu nationalist criticism of the government's agenda had another, quite distinct and very contemporary argument, that the agenda was discriminatory because it violated the state's constitutional obligation to treat all religions equally. Chatterjee asked the all-India convention: "Why is this attempt to change the personal laws confined to Hindu society alone?" On the other side of the political spectrum, progressive critics such as Acharya J. B. Kripalani, a senior pre-independence Congress leader, also detected that in attempting to justify this position by claiming that the "true" spirit and teachings of Hinduism were compatible with the proposed reforms, the government had introduced a potentially dangerous element into the debate, by implying the innate superiority of Hindusim to allegedly more rigid and dogmatic faiths, primarily Islam.[145] Kripalani stated:

"If they single out the Hindu community for their reforming zeal, they cannot escape the charge of being communalists in the sense that they favor the Hindu community and are indifferent to the good of the Muslim community. Do we want one community to be in advance of other communities in India, simply because it happens to be in the majority?"

Meanwhile, ever since the 1950's the violation of the impartiality principle became a central rallying point for Hindu nationalists attacks on the Congress party for their "pseudo secularism," guilty in particular of appeasement of India's largest minority, Muslims. Once the Hindu nationalists, began their dramatic rise in Indian politics in the

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[144] Gary J. Jacobsohn, *The Wheel of Law: India's Secularism in Comparative Constitutional Context*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 99.
[145] Rochana Bajpai, "Constituent Assembly Debates and Minority Rights." *Economic and Political Weekly* 35, no. 21/22 (2000): 1837–1845.

1990's, the demand for a uniform civil code featured as one of the three core points of their political platform. Nonetheless, six decades later, the codification of Hindu personal and family laws remains the single most important instance of regulation and reform implemented by the Indian state since independence.[146]

The other major focus of the Indian secular state's reformist activism in the 1950's and 1960's was the administration of privately run Hindu temples and shrines. The state's extensive interventions in this sphere included a particular emphasis on ensuring access for Dalits (or Harijans, the Ghandian term for untouchable communities widely used until the 1990's) to such sites.[147] Geographically, the problem was most widespread in western and southern India, where authorities of numerous Hindu temples and shrines barred untouchables and social movements challenging the exclusion existed or were emerging.

Thus, the Indian state intervened by mandating "the throwing open of Hindu religious institutions… to all classes and sections of Hindus" relying on the powers granted by Article 25 (2a) of the constitution, which empowered the state to regulate or restrict any activity associated with religious practice, and more importantly Article 25 (2b) which empowered the state to act in the interests of social welfare and reform. In this regard, the 1950 Constitution's Article 17 also abolished untouchability and forbade its practice in any form. In 1955, the Indian parliament followed with the passage of the Untouchability Offences Act, which delivered a prison sentence of up to six months and a

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[146] Sumantra Bose, *Secular States, Religious Politics: India, Turkey, and the Future of Secularism*. 1 edition. (Cambridge, United Kingdom ; New York, NY, USA: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 56.
[147] Gary J. Jacobsohn, *The Wheel of Law: India's Secularism in Comparative Constitutional Context*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 95.

fine for violations of the this constitutional principle.[148]

Even before Independence, however, the government of the province of Bombay for example, had passed a similar temple entry act in 1947 to combat the curbs on entry into Hindu temples. The case of the Swaminarayan sect illustrates the determination of the Indian state in following through with the efforts to reform oppressive religious practices and the challenges the state faced in the complex religious landscape of India. In 1948, members of the Swaminarayan sect, a puritan Hindu order founded in the early nineteenth century approached the judiciary for an exemption from the act, arguing that untouchables who were referred to as "polluting" would try to enter their temple. After the Indian Constitution came into effect, the order's legal suit cited its freedom to manage its own affairs. They even claimed to be distinct from Hinduism therefore not covered by the Constitution's provisions on equal access to Hindu religious sites. After a lengthy and drawn out legal battle in the lower courts, the order appealed the decision and the case was reviewed by India's Supreme Court in 1966.[149]

The Supreme Court's judgment, written by Chief Justice Gajendragadkar was revealing. It said that the sects twenty-year legal battle to protect its temple from polluting outcasts was "founded on superstition, ignorance, and complete misunderstanding of the true teachings of Hinduism and indeed of the real significance of the tenets and philosophy taught by Swaminarayan himself."[150] In a detailed account of the essence of Hindusim, the judgment praised polytheism and its lack of dogma and

[148] Gary J. Jacobsohn, *The Wheel of Law: India's Secularism in Comparative Constitutional Context*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 96.
[149] Ibid, *The Wheel of Law: India's Secularism in Comparative Constitutional Context*., 104.
[150] Sumantra Bose, *Secular States, Religious Politics: India, Turkey, and the Future of Secularism*. 1 edition. (Cambridge, United Kingdom ; New York, NY, USA: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 91.

concluded that given its uniqueness among the world's faiths, Hinduism may be broadly described "as a way of life" than a religion like any other. This opinion is quite reflective of the impulses of the Indian state to use the powers granted in the Constitution and pursue legislation to reform the oppressive practices within religion, and perhaps more controversially sort out the "good" in religion from the "superstitions and reactionary."

Political Safeguards

The issue of political safeguards for religious minorities presented another contentious issue in which the role of the state vis-à-vis religion and religious communities was debated extensively in the Assembly. Separate electorates, reserved quotas for communities in the legislature in proportion to population and various forms of proportional representation were the chief mechanisms proposed in the Constituent Assembly for ensuring minority representation. Muslim representatives were at the forefront of such demands although Sikhs and representatives of backward castes put forward similar claims as well. All three methods of representation were considered not only for religious communities but also for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

However, in the end, the Assembly rejected all methods of representation for religious minorities fearful that it would foster communalism and threaten national unity; only the proposal for reserved seats for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes was passed. Rather than take measures to protect distinct cultural identities and ensure their representation as a group in the legislative process, once again in line with the Indian state's practice of reformative secularism, reserved seats for backward castes and classes became both a way to compensate for the social and economic injustices perpetrated

against them and a legitimate means to overcome their backward standing.[151] Positive

discrimination for religious minorities could not be justified on similar grounds, as

Assembly members thought that it would contradict state neutrality vis-a-vis religion and

would result in special treatment of certain religious groups. The reluctance of the

Assembly members towards any official protection of religious minorities also reflected a

more general attitude: the emphasis was on national unity as opposed to

multiculturalism.[152]

The Assembly rejected the proposal for separate electorates for religious

minorities for a number of reasons. The strongest argument against the proposal was

based on considerations of nationhood and national unity. Separate electorates, in the

view of many of the Assembly members, were historically associated with a policy based

on the premise that India was a "conglomeration of distinct communities" not a nation.

As Vallabhbhai Patel, one of the leaders of the independence movement and one of the

most influential members of Congress, forcefully asserted: "Those who want that kind of

a thing have a place in Pakistan, not here . . . . Here, we are building a nation and we are

laying the foundations of One Nation, and those who choose to divide again and sow the

seeds of disruption will have no place, no quarter here."[153] For Nehru, abolishing separate

electorates was also important for "disconnecting from the past" and creating a secular

democracy.[154] Moreover, another prominent member, Govind Ballabh Pant, claimed that

separate electorates would isolate the majority from the minority communities and limit

[151] Christoph Jaffrelot, "Composite Culture is not multiculturalism" in Varshney, Ashutosh, ed. *India and the Politics of Developing Countries: Essays in Memory of Myron Weiner*. 1 edition. (New Delhi ; Thousand Oaks, Calif: SAGE Publications Pvt. Ltd, 2004), 144.

[152] Bhargava, Rajeev. *The Promise of India's Secular Democracy*. (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2010), 32.

[153] CAD V:271

[154] CAD X:331–32.

its answerability. Separate electorates were also opposed on secular grounds, as they involved the introduction of religious considerations into the political sphere. In fact as Christoph Jaffrelot shows, there was a "paradoxical convergence" between the secular nationalists and the Hindu traditionalists on this issue. Whereas secular nationalists opposed political safeguards for religious minorities because they viewed the individual as the basis of society, Hindu nationalists feared that these safeguards would undermine the "Hinduness" of the nation.[155]

Eventually, although the proposal for separate electorates or reserved seats was rejected on the basis of "overcoming the demon of communlism" and ensuring national unity, this practice was nonetheless accepted for Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes on May 26, 1949.[156] Justified as a means of advancing "social welfare and reform" and deemed necessary to enable them to overcome historical disadvantages, these groups were granted political safeguards because, as B. R. Ambedkar explained, they were an "economic, political and social minority and had faced an intense degree of social separation and discrimination, and not a religious minority."[157] Such provisions were defended in nationalist opinion and in the claims put forward by the representatives of these groups, primarily on the ground that access to political power would facilitate the economic and social advancement of these groups. They were regarded as temporary measures necessary to realize the principle of equality of opportunity for groups that were

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[155] Christoph Jaffrelot, "Composite Culture is not multiculturalism" in Varshney, Ashutosh, ed. *India and the Politics of Developing Countries: Essays in Memory of Myron Weiner*. 1 edition. (New Delhi ; Thousand Oaks, Calif: SAGE Publications Pvt. Ltd, 2004), 144.

[156] Zoya Hassan, Social Inequlaities, Secularism and Minorities in India's Democracy, in Hasan, Mushirul, ed. *Will Secular India Survive*. Gurgaon, Haryana: Imprint One, 2004.

[157] Rochana Bajpai. "Constituent Assembly Debates and Minority Rights." *Economic and Political Weekly* 35, no. 21/22 (2000): 1837–1845.

backward. Nonetheless, these provisions also exemplified the reformist spirit of secularism embedded in the Indian constitution.

Conclusion

This chapter examines the establishment of Turkish and Indian secularisms to show how secularism was understood and constructed, as an ideology and a policy of the state, and how it interacts with and intervenes in the religious sphere. Comparing the Turkish and Indian experience suggests that secularism was at the center of building a nation-state and creating a modern national identity in both of these non-Western settings. Rather than completely separating religion and the state, both leaders and national assemblies envisioned a model of secularism that allowed the state to interfere in, supervise and regulate the religious domain to ensure that religious identities would complement the new national identity.

However, the way each assembly envisioned national identity differed, their justifications for state intervention in the religious domain differed, and the means through which these interventions would take place also differed. Whereas restrictive intervention in Turkey placed religion under state control and discouraged its visibility in the public sphere, reformative intervention in India attempted to eliminate or reform religious practices that hindered social justice and equality. State control of religion and religious institutions in Turkey was also intended to limit religious challenges against the newly established secular Republic. Reformative secularism in India, on the other hand, sought to overcome social inequalities rooted in religious traditions and led to reformist

state policies in independent India.

Before I conclude, it is important to note that the origins of the secular state in India and Turkey have two salient differences. The first is the reason the two republics adopted secularism as a core principle in the first place. The statements of the two leaders during the founding of the secular states, Jawaharlal Nehru and Mustafa Kemal are revealing of the very different motivations and objectives at work in the two cases. To illustrate, on February 3, 1948 the daily newspaper the *Hindustan Times* reported that Nehru said, "We are planning to create a secular state, where one community or group … will not be able to be permitted to usurp the rights of another." On April 18, 1949 the same paper reported Nehru's elaboration of the rationale of the secular state in the making:

"I am convinced that the measure of India's progress will be the measure of our giving full effect to what has been called a secular state. That, of course, does not mean a people lacking in morals or religion. It means that while religion is completely free, the state including in its wide fold various religions and cultures, gives protection and opportunities to all and thus brings about an atmosphere of tolerance and cooperation."[158]

In short, Nehru believed that a state whose identity was not based on or tied to any religion, and which was impartial towards the nations multiple religious faiths and traditions was essential due to India's multi-religious composition. Mustafa Kemal's argument for a secular state in Turkey during its formative period drew on a very different rationale. In 1923 he declared, "The war to establish the Turkish nation state is over with ourselves as victorious, but our real struggle for independence begins only now – this is the struggle to achieve Western civilization." On 1 March 1924, two days before

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[158] Ashutosh Varshney, ed. *India and the Politics of Developing Countries: Essays in Memory of Myron Weiner*. 1 edition. (New Delhi ; Thousand Oaks, Calif: SAGE Publications Pvt. Ltd, 2004), 47.

the Republic abolished the Caliphate, he told the National Assembly in Ankara,

> "The most important point is to free our legal attitudes, our codes, and our legal organizations immediately from principles dominating our life that are incompatible with the necessities of the age.. The directions to be followed in civil law and family law should be nothing but that of Western civilization."[159]

As the secularizing project of the Turkish Republic moved into high gear, he commented further on October 1925:

> "The Turkish Revolution …means replacing an age old political unity based on religion with one based on another tie, that of nationality. This nation has also accepted that all of its laws should be based on secular grounds only, on a secular mentality that accepts …change and development."[160]

This preoccupation with joining "Western civilization" has its roots in the failure of the Ottoman Empire to stem its long decline that began in the seventeenth century. As the nineteenth century progressed, the decline escalated sharply and efforts to modernize the Ottoman imperial state (such as the Tanzimat reforms) failed to stem the tide; it resulted in the Ottoman Turks losing significant parts of the Empire to its European rivals. This devastating loss convinced Kemal and his comrades of the superiority of Western Civilization. In the words of Nur Yalman, "the Kemalists' secularizing program of the 1920's and 1930's aimed to set up a new culture…uncontaminated by … a past… regarded as backward, corrupt, rotten, and weak and shameful."[161] And since Islam was at the heart of the ancient regime, it was Islam that received the heaviest blow. Nur Yalman's statement vividly captures the motivations of Ataturk and his close group of followers during the nation-building project.

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[159] Andrew Davison, *Secularism and Revivalism in Turkey: A Hermeneutic Reconsideration*. New Haven; Milton Keynes UK: Yale University Press Lightning Source UK, 2013.
[160] Berkes, Niyazi. *The Development of Secularism in Turkey*. 1 edition. New York: Routledge, 1999.
[161] Nur Yalman, "Some observations on Secularism in Islam: The Cultural Revolution in Turkey", Daedalus, Vol. 102, No. 1, p.139-68.

By contrast, the secularism adopted by the Indian state was not inspired by an outwardly focused objective and had nothing to do with the decision to imitate the West. In fact, the opposite could even be said to be true. Through its existence as a secular state that provided equal treatment and protection to all religions, particularly to minorities, the Indian state sought to highlight its democratic character and consequently assert its difference from its (non-representative) colonial predecessor. As can be seen from the Assembly debates, members frequently grappled with how to secure a distinctive Indian modernity, preserving its uniqueness and tradition while taking its place among the modern nations. Indian secularism therefore grew from this indigenous vision of what it means to be modern, developed in the three decades of popular mobilization for freedom from British colonialism led by the Indian National Congress.

In contrast to the early Turkish secularists who emphasized a radical break from tradition, the founders of the Indian secular state actually emphasized continuity with and preservation of an Indian tradition: mutual tolerance and coexistence of different religious faiths. Nehru was very much inspired by the idea of "unity in diversity." As early as 1931, during a nationwide civil disobedience agitation against British rule waged by the Congress under Mahatma Ghandi's leadership, the party's annual conference even adopted a resolution on the fundamental principles of the future constitution of free India. The resolution included this sentence, "The state shall observe neutrality in regard to all religions.[162]"

Of course, it is also important to note that the Indian state came to being in a

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[162] Amales Tripathi. *Indian National Congress and the Struggle for Freedom, 1885-1947*. (New Delhi, India: Oxford University Press, 2014), 78.

rather different international milieu, more than two decades after the Turkish one, at a time when the Second World War was coming to an end and authoritarian ideologies such as fascism had been decisively defeated. Where as during the 1920's it was a commonly held belief among intelligentsia, and also in Europe, that a strong and persuasive leader and a centralized state was the only possible engine of change to push through reforms in order to modernize society, this was no longer the conventional wisdom after the devastation caused by strongmen like Hitler. It was also in the 1920's and early 1930's that there were far more brutal dictatorships in power including Stalin in Russia and the fascist regime of Mussolini in Italy.

The second salient difference between the contexts of the secular state in India and Turkey is related to this point and equally crucial. Turkish secularism was from the outset an ideology and policy promoted by an authoritarian state. The program of radical secularization, the core of the Kemalist "revolution from above" was imposed by a ruling elite on a rather reluctant countryside. There was dissent and opposition in the 1920's, all of which was put down by the Kemalists, sometimes with brutal violence. The long period of single party rule by Mustafa Kemal's CHP came to an end in 1950, but it's legacy of a powerful state was enduring, and is the central pillar of Turkey's politics to this day.

India's secularist state was, too, no doubt an elite driven project but it emerged through a process of democratic debate and deliberation in comparison to Turkey and was not imposed through coercion and violence. It was indigenously rooted and democratically crafted, both quite in contrast to the Turkish case. This can be clearly seen from the 1947-1949 Constituent Assembly debates, which was a truly deliberative body

in which a range of views were expressed and discussed. More importantly, the Indian state's secularism became an integral part, from the early 1950's onwards of a flawed but functioning democracy unlike the Turkish one which was periodically interrupted by military coups. Despite these profound differences in the origins and premises of their founding secularism, however, beginning in the 1990's both states were challenged by the rise of religious parties and struggled with how to incorporate these religious movements into their political systems. This is the topic of the following chapter.

The deeper significance of the cases of Turkey and India as experiments in non-Western secular statehood can hardly be over-stated. Turkey has long been regarded as a test case of whether a secular state is possible in a Muslim society. Nearly a century after the secular Republic's founding, the answer to that question is debatable. What is clear, however, is that secularism has ceased to be the ideology of the Turkish Republic of the early twenty first century. The same is becoming true of India as it approaches the seventy-fifth anniversary of its independence. For nearly half a century after independence, secularism was considered essential to holding a vast, multi religious country together. That notion is also being challenged by the rise of Hindu nationalism in India today.

Chapter 3
The Rise of Religious Parties in Turkey and India: Religious Networks and Political Opportunism

In the December 1995 elections, for the first time in Turkish republican history, an Islamist party, the Welfare Party, won the majority of the votes and the single largest number of seas, 158 out of 550.[163] To the dismay of the secular establishment, the party's controversial leader Necmettin Erbakan became Turkey's first Islamist Prime Minister after a short-lived coalition government of center-right political parties. He was elected to the Turkish parliament from Konya, a city in western Anatolia famous as the hometown of the thirteenth century Sufi saint Rumi, who is known as Mevlana in Turkey.[164] Erbakan is perhaps better known as the founder of the National View movement, which has provided political Islam in Turkey with both ideological and material support since the 1970's.

In its early years, the Islamist movement in Turkey drew significant support from the followers of the Nurcu and Naksibendi religious orders, which had been banned along with all the other religious brotherhoods by the secular state in the mid-1920's but continued to maintain a clandestine existence and to command widespread social influence in Turkey.[165] One of the important figures behind the political rise of Erbakan and his party was Mehmet Zahid Kotku, a leader of the Naqshibendi tarikat and the imam of the Iskenderpasha mosque in Istanbul's devout Fatih district. Kotku was one of the

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[163] Kayhan Delibas, *Rise of Political Islam in Turkey, The: Urban Poverty, Grassroots Activism and Islamic Fundamentalism*. (1 edition. I.B.Tauris, 2014), 42.
[164] M. Hakan Yavuz, "Political Islam and the Welfare (Refah) Party in Turkey." *Comparative Politics* 30, no. 1 (1997): 63–82.
[165] Binnaz Toprak, *Islam and Political Development in Turkey*. (Leiden: Brill Academic Pub, 1981), 32.

early supporters of the establishment of an Islamist party. As he said in one of his

influential sermons:

"In the aftermath of the deposition of the Sultan Abdulhamid II, the country's governance has been taken over by masons, who are imitating the West. They are a minority. They cannot represent our nation. It is a historical duty to give the governance of the country to the real representatives of our nation by establishing a political party. Join this already belated endeavor."[166]

In a twist of history, religious forces also assumed the helm of the state for the

first time in India at nearly the same moment, in mid-1996. In independent India's

eleventh general election in May 1996, the Hindu nationalist party, the Bharatiya Janata

Party (Indian's People's Party, BJP), for the first time emerged as the single-largest party

in the parliament, winning 161 of the 543 seats in the Lok Sabha (House of the People),

its directly elected chamber.[167] The BJP's rise has been meteoric; in the 1984

parliamentary elections the party had held just two of the 543 seats. In 1996, Hindu

nationalist Atal Behari Vajpayee was sworn in as Prime Minister along with a BJP

dominated cabinet. Although the Hindu nationalists first encounter with power would last

only thirteen days, the BJP yet again emerged as the single largest party in the 1999

elections and the leader of the Hindu nationalist party, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, served as

Prime Minister until 2004.

India's first Hindu nationalist party was formed in 1951, just before independent

India's first general election. From then until 1980, when its name was slightly amended,

it was known as Bharatiya Jana Sangh (Indian People's Organization, BJS). From its

inception until today, the BJS/BJP has been one member of a "Sangh Parivar" (family of

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[166] Banu Eligür, *The Mobilization of Political Islam in Turkey*. 1 edition. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 33.
[167] Ghanshyam. Shah, "BJP's Rise to Power." *Economic and Political Weekly* 31, no. 2/3 (1996): 165–70.

organizations), which constitutes India's Hindu nationalist movement. The core

organization of this family is the Rashtriya Swayemsevak Sangh (National Volunteers

Organization', RSS) founded in 1925.[168] The RSS, which is headquartered in the city of

Nagpur in India's western Maharashtra State, has several million members organized in

tens of thousands of local branches (shakhas) across India and is known for both its

ideological commitment and organizational discipline.[169] The Supreme Chief of the RSS

from 1940 to 1973, Madhav Sadashiv Golwalkar, writing in the 1930's articulates the

core of the Hindu nationalist ideology:

> "The non-Hindu people of Hindustan must either adopt the Hindu culture and
> language, must learn and respect and hold in reverence the Hindu religion and must
> entertain no idea but the glorification of the Hindu race or they may stay in the country,
> wholly subordinated to the Hindu nation, claiming nothing, deserving no privileges, far
> less any preferential treatment."[170]

This chapter will trace the origins of these religious political movements and the

parties representing them in the political sphere, the AKP and the BJP respectively, and

explore the factors that laid the groundwork for their political ascent. Why did the earlier

Hindu nationalist parties fail to command the level of support now possessed by the BJP?

How and why did the BJP move from the political margins to the center? Likewise, what

explains the success of the Welfare Party, the precursor to the AKP, which grew out of a

tradition of successive Islamist parties first formed in the 1970's? How is it that an

Islamist party and a Hindu nationalist party now dominate the political sphere in two

countries where religion was once relegated to the private realm by strict state

supervision?

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[168] Christophe Jaffrelot, *The Hindu Nationalist Movement in India*. (Columbia University Press, 1998), 43.
[169] Malkani, K. R. *The RSS Story*. Impex India, 1980.
[170] Thomas Blom Hansen, *The Saffron Wave: Democracy and Hindu Nationalism in Modern India*.
(Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), 23.

In particular, this chapter will highlight the role that religious associations played in providing organizational and ideological support to party activists in building robust political organizations. Prior to this mobilization, the chapter will explore how these religious political movements benefited from the religious overtures made by the secular actors during the 1980's, in particular the leaders' instrumental use of religion and a majoritarian discourse which paved the way for the rise of religious nationalism during the 1990's and beyond. Based on interviews with activists and experts, I argue that in both India and Turkey secular actors made space for religion and religious appeals in the public sphere, creating a favorable political opportunity structure for religious mobilization and lending credibility to their arguments. Subsequently, religiously based parties equipped with strong organizational networks deftly took advantage of these opportunities that had opened up after years of political exclusion and by bringing economic grievances to the forefront were able to broaden their appeal beyond their core constituency.

Religious Mobilization in Turkey

The Transition to Democracy: Religious Appeals Enter the Political Discourse

The transition to democracy in 1946 was an important turning point in the rise of religious parties in Turkey. With the establishment of a multiparty system, the Republican People's Party (CHP), the party representing Kemalism, lost its monopoly on power. Thereafter, parties were forced to compete for power, and appeals to religious identity and practice became an important factor in attracting votes.[171] The pious rural

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[171] Kemal Karpat, Turkey's Politics: The Transition to a Multi-Party System. (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1959), 43.

periphery, which had largely been excluded from politics since the founding of the Republic in 1923, now became an important political constituency whose interests had to be taken into consideration by secular political parties. All of the secularizing reforms to change society remained limited to the urban centers; the countryside remained largely untouched. In 1935, the population was 76.5 percent rural and 80.8 percent of the population was illiterate.[172] Hence, during the initial years of the Turkish Republic it was very difficult for the public to embrace Ataturk's reforms. Until the 1950s, the bulk of the Turkish population remained firmly tied to their Islamic beliefs and practices, while the urban centers were becoming modernized and secular. As Serif Mardin, famously put it: "In effect, two Turkeys coexisted in uneasy harmony: an urban, modern, secular "center" and a rural, traditional, religious "periphery," with little contact between them." [173]

With the transition to democracy, a number of political parties based on Islamic themes emerged. Between the years 1945 and 1950, twenty-four political parties were founded and at least eight had explicit references in their party programs to Islamic values.[174] The Nation Party (MP), which was founded in 1948 by a group of dissident Democratic Party (DP) members who were expelled from breaching the party discipline, was the most explicitly religious party at the time. The MP demanded greater emphasis on Islamic morals and values in social life, greater respect for Islamic institutions and an end to state control of religious organizations. However, the party could not mobilize the electorate in the 1950 general elections. It won only a single seat in parliament, receiving 4.6 percent of the votes. This demonstrated that religion or appeals to religious identity

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[172] Banu Eligur, *The Mobilization of Political Islam in Turkey* (London: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 46.

[173] Serif Mardin, "Center-Periphery Relations: A Key to Turkish Politics?" *Daedalus* 102, (1973): 169-190.

[174] Banu Eligur, *The Mobilization of Political Islam in Turkey* (London: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 61.

by itself was not a sufficient factor for attracting votes from the Turkish electorate. While the majority of the Turkish people supported a relaxation of the secularist policies, the electorate's major concern at the time was socio-economic grievances.[175] The Nation Party was banned in 1953 on the grounds of its political use of religion.

Having realized that parties could now capitalize on the religion issue, even the CHP decided to reappraise the party's secularization policies in the aftermath of its General Congress in 1947. In 1948, pilgrimage to Mecca was allowed. This was followed a year later by the reopening of the sacred tombs, which had been closed down in 1925. In 1949, religious instruction, which had been withdrawn from the public schools curriculum in 1932, was restored in primary schools as an elective course for two hours a week.[176] Despite the CHP's efforts, however, the Democratic Party (DP), founded by a group of dissident CHP members in 1946, won a parliamentary majority in 1950, ending the single party period since the founding.

Headed by Adnan Menderes, the DP criticized the repressive measures taken by the CHP against religious groups and promised to end some of the secularist policies instituted by the Kemalist regime. By promising to bring services to the peasants the party appealed to those parts of society that felt marginalized by the secular Westernization policies. As Binnaz Toprak, a Turkish scholar on Islam and political development in Turkey noted: "It was not only the RPP's elitist understanding of secularism but also it's economic policies that made the government deeply unpopular

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[175] Binnaz Toprak, *Islam and Political Development in Turkey* (Leiden, the Netherlands: E.J. Brill, 1981), 75.

[176] Güneş-Ayata, Ayşe, and Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi (Turkey). *CHP: örgüt ve ideoloji*. (CHP: Organization and Ideology) Gündoğan Yayınları, 1992.

among the large majority of Turkish citizens by the end of World War 2."[177] The DP

soon became identified with small merchants who resented the patronage of the state

enjoyed by leading industrialist, the Sufi leaders who had been persecuted, the villagers

and thus conservative values of Anatolia. Its political discourse centered on respect for

traditional culture and freedom for business and religious activity.[178]

While in power, the DP also took a series of measures aimed at creating more

space for religion and religious education in Turkish society. They allocated substantial

state resources to religious institutions (mosques) and preacher (imamhatip) schools. The

DP also forged an alliance with the Islamic brotherhoods, mainly the Nurcus and the

Naksibendis in exchange for their electoral support. They provided conservative votes

from the countryside to center-right parties in the elections. In turn, these Islamic

brotherhoods, which used to operate clandestinely under the CHP, were allowed to

proceed relatively openly.[179] This was the first election in which Islamic brotherhoods

could exert an indirect influence on elections. Previously under the Ottoman Empire, the

Islamic orders were controlled by the Seyh-ul Islam for their appointments, promotion

and salaries and thus could not exercise independent political influence.[180]

The Islamic brotherhoods focused on raising a more religious youth through the

Quran courses under their control. Some Islamic brotherhood followers became civil

servants at the Diyanet and utilized state-owned mosques to keep Islamic collective

identity alive. Hakan Yavuz, a Turkish scholar on the Islamist movement, argues "these

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[177] Toprak, Binnaz. *Islam and Political Development in Turkey*. Leiden: Brill Academic Pub, 1981.
[178] Taha Akyol, "Sagin Tabani Tavani Yenilesmeye Zorluyor" [The Social Bases of the Right urges the Leadership to Change] in Hidir Goktas and Rusen Cakir, eds, *Vatan, Millet ve Pragmatizm* [Motherland, Nation and Pragmatism] (Istanbul: Metis Guncel, 1991)
[179] M. Hakan Yavuz, *Islamic Political Identity in Turkey*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 61.
[180] See Mehmet Demirci, "Turkiye'nin Cagdaslasma Surecinde Tarikatlar" (Tarikats in the Process of Turkey's Modernization) Ankara: Turkiye Diyanet Vakfi Yayinlari, 2000), 163-8.

orders took refuge in the mosques and covered themselves as the mosque community."

Working within the limits of his era, Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, the leader of the Nurcu

brotherhood and a great source of inspiration for the Gulen movement, focused on saving

the faith from atheism, masons and communism. Nursi advised that Islamists should not

get involved in politics unless 60 or 70 percent of the nation became really religious.[181]

Until there were faithful cadres, he argued, it was improper to attempt to govern the state.

He emphasized raising Muslim consciousness at the individual level, which would be

followed by the collective adoption of an Islamic way of life. Nursi predicted that Sharia

rule would be established and Islam would be the dominant force in the country in the

future: one day, a faithfully raised generation would take control of the state. After

twenty-three years of keeping a distance from politics Said Nursi publicly stated that he

would vote for DP and ordered his followers to do the same.[182]

During the Menderes era, religious instruction in public schools was encouraged,

Arabic replaced Turkish in five daily calls for prayer in mosques and broadcasts of the

Quran over state owned radio were allowed. The restrictions on the controversial Quran

courses of the Islamic brotherhoods were also relaxed. [183] Until the end of the 1960's,

however, there was no movement of political Islam in Turkey. As Recai Kutan, the Chair

of the Felicity Party, argued in an interview with the author in July 2018, "the DP period

was an era of Quran course and mosque construction. Yet, there was no consciousness of

political Islam at the time." While the majority of the people might have been religious in

their private lives, they did not equate religion with a project of political Islam.

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[181] Mehmet Gumus, "Bediuzzaman ve DP" (Bediuzzaman and the DP), Milli Gazete, January 7, 2000.
[182] Banu Eligur, *The Mobilization of Political Islam in Turkey* (London: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 61.
[183] Hakan Yavuz, *Islamic Political Identity in Turkey* (New York, Oxford University Press, 2003), 63.

Slowly, however things began to sour. Menderes' party increasingly became a source of authoritarianism with its resort to repressive measures against the opposition such as tightening the press law, jailing scores of journalists and banning political meetings and demonstrations.[184] Menderes' policies were regarded as breaking with the Kemalist tradition and seen as a threat to the secular state by many Kemalists and prompted the Turkish military to intervene in 1960 in the first of several coups.[185] The 1960 coup also marked a series of military interventions that exposed the failure of Turkey's political system to satisfy the majority of its citizens. Many Turks felt alienated from the Western oriented, secular regime that was unable to deliver the material wealth promised by modernization and economic development. After the coup, Menderes was sentenced to death in 1961 by the military for violating the constitution.[186] Following his execution, unlike the military regimes in many Latin American countries, the Turkish military turned power back over to the politicians and returned to the barracks, but only after instituting a number of reforms that strengthened its political role.

One of its most important reforms was the creation of the National Security Council (MGK), a body dominated by the military responsible for ensuring that the government's domestic and foreign policies were in line with the basic principles of the Kemalist revolution, particularly secularism. This body would come to take on an important role later by serving as a mechanism that enabled the military to interfere in the civilian government, in particular the Islamist governments.[187] While technically an

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[184] Ergun Ozbudun, *Contemporary Turkish Politics: Challenges to Democratic Consolidation* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2000), 15.
[185] Ahmad Feroz, *The Turkish Experiment in Democracy 1950-1975* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997), 44-45.
[186] Ibid, *The Turkish Experiment in Democracy,* 46.
[187] Ersel Aydinli, "A Paradigmatic Shift for the Turkish Generals and an End to the Coup Era in Turkey." *Middle East Journal* 63, no. 4 (2009): 581–96.

advisory body, the MGK's recommendations were later assigned a priority in government decisions by the 1982 Constitution. Thus, the MGK institutionalized the role of the military in the political process and provided a mechanism by which the military could directly influence the civilian leadership.

The military soon came to realize that Islam had become an integral part of social life with the transition to democracy and during the 1950's, and so the 1961 constitution, drafted under the supervision of the military contained a large number of provisions on civil liberties, among which the freedom of religious belief, worship and education were included. At the same time, most importantly for our purposes, the 1961 constitution expanded the scope for associational freedom, which led to the proliferation of autonomous groups, including religious groups.[188] Before the 1961 constitution, leftist, ultranationalist and Islamist groups were suppressed by the state, and hence kept a low profile. These groups took advantage of the post coup wave of liberalism as a political opportunity to further expand their organizational networks.

Meanwhile, the Islamist movement in Turkey was also influenced by the wave of Islamism in the world, which gained prominence by the late 1960's. This wave of political Islam in the Muslim world inspired the Turkish Islamists as well. [189] Translations into Turkish of the works of the twentieth-century political Islamists Hasan al-Banna (1906-49) and Sayyid Qutb (1906-64) played an important role in the framing of Islamists political rhetoric in Turkey. In the 1960's the Islamist movement was

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[188] Angel Rabasa and Stephen Larrabee, *The Rise of Political Islam in Turkey* (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 2008), 34.
[189] Banu Eligur. *The Mobilization of Political Islam in Turkey* (London: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 61.

represented mainly within the nationalist conservative wing of the Justice Party, the successor to the Democrat Party. [190]

Meanwhile, religious organizations that had resurfaced in the 1960s increased in number in the 1970s. Different Sufi orders (tarikatlar) and religious networks helped the poor cope with the problems of modernization and became clubs for dislocated groups seeking solidarity in a rapidly changing world.[191] Sencer Ayata, a professor of sociology at the Middle Eastern Technical University, noted in an interview with the author in July 2019 that primarily as a result of rapid urbanization in Turkey in the 1960's and 1970's, the Islamic brotherhoods began to exercise a prominent influence over Turkish society by strengthening ideologically, financially and organizationally.[192] The Menderes era thus had two important results. First, it expanded the process of democratization and opened up the political arena to appeals based on religion and to religious groups that had previously been marginalized or excluded from politics. Second, it provided political space for religious groups to surface and begin to organize politically.

The Rise of Islamist Parties: The Expansion of Religious Networks

In the history of the Turkish Republic, the first party with a clear Islamist agenda was the National Order Party (MNP) established in 1970 under the leadership of Necmettin Erbakan, an independent deputy from Konya and a former professor at Istanbul Technical University. The founders of the MNP and its successors came out of the "National View" movement (Milli Gorus), a religious organization whose leaders sought a return to

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[190] Ahmad Feroz, *The Turkish Experiment in Democracy 1950-1975* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997), 78.
[191] Doğu Ergil, "Identity Crises and Political Instability in Turkey," *Journal of International Affairs* 54, no. 2 (2000): 53.
[192] Author's interview with Sencer Ayata, Professor of Sociology at METU, Ankara, July 20, 2019.

traditional "national" values and institutions. [193] Erbakan was the intellectual architect of the National View movement and throughout his career he criticized Turkey's secular Kemlalist regime and argued for replacing it. Rather than advocating for a violent overthrow, however, his approach favored a gradualist "bottom up" approach to Islamist revival and political reform that relied heavily on Islamist dawa, or ideological preaching and education. It is important to note here that the leading figure of the Nakisbendi brotherhood, Mehmet Zahit Kotku (1897-1980) also played a crucial role in the founding of the party by Erbakan, who was a follower of Kotku.[194]

The followers of the Naksibendi and Nurcu orders also played an active role in the first Islamist party's establishment. The MNP adopted the National View's outlook, which proposed a national (Islamic) culture and education, industrialization and social justice based on the principles of Islam. Because it was illegal to use religious symbols for political purposes, the party uses the words national and culture to refer to Islam. Their goal was to build a "national (Islamic) order" and put an end to the process of "imitating the West"[195] The rejection of the West and westernization was to some extent an objection to the Kemalist design to reform society and politics along secularist lines, eroding the influence of Islam in society and politics. The West was opposed on the grounds that it provided a source of inspiration, a framework of justification for the authoritarian westernization and secularization policies at home.[196] In addition, the

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[193] Necmettin Erbakan, Milli Gorus [The National View] (Istanbul: Dergah Yayinlari, 1975) National was used as a pseudonym for religious, since it was prohibited to use religion in advancing political goals under the Turkish Constitution.

[194] Rusen Cakir, "Ne Seriat, Ne Demokrasi: Refah Partisini Anlamak [Neither the Sharia, nor Democracy: Understanding the Welfare Party] (Istanbul: Metis Yayinlari, 1994)

[195] Ihsan D. Daği, "Transformation of Islamic Political Identity in Turkey: Rethinking the West and Westernization," *Turkish Studies* 6, no. 1 (2005): 21–37.

[196] Mehmet Dogan, *Batılılasma Ihaneti,* (Istanbul: Beyan Yayınları, 1986), 87.

leaders of the MNP saw Turkey's identity and future closely linked with the Muslim world, rather than with the West.

The growing polarization and political violence between the radical leftist and the ultranationalists by the end of the 1960's led to the second military intervention of March 12, 1971. The Constitutional Court, following the military intervention closed down the MNP, along with the other political parties. Since the military's foremost concern at this point was the rise of the radical left, the military permitted the reestablishment of the MNP, contingent only on a change of name. Suleyman Arif Emre, a prominent MNP parliamentarian, remarked on the change in the military's approach toward Islam during this period as follows:

"Then the General Secretary of the NSC, General Refet Ulgenalp, was against the closure of the MNP. In his report, Refet Pasha was arguing that it was necessary to emphasize religious education in order to counter increased leftist anarchy. He even sent an army official to the National Education convention to prevent a decision against religious education."[197]

Hence, the National Salvation Party (MSP) replaced the MNP in 1973 under the same leadership. Like the MNP, the MSP fused Islam and Turkish nationalism. The MSP's slogan was "A Great Turkey Once Again". The party's proposed solution to Turkey's problems was to return to Islam's teachings and a "Muslim way of life" on the basis that "moral development" was the main requirement and underlying principle for "material development." The party's leaders argued that the process of Westernization had fragmented Turkish society and weakened the country and in turn advocated a policy of rapid industrialization, which would bring about widespread development.[198] While the MSP appealed to the Anatolian entrepreneurs who had found it difficult to receive

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[197] Emre, Siyasette 35 Yil, vol. 1, 221.
[198] Jacob Landau, "The National Salvation Party in Turkey," Asian and African Studies 11, (1976): 1–57.

state favors because of their provincial or religious backgrounds, it also appealed to the poor in its promises of cutting down inflation and providing social welfare. The party leaders repeatedly called for an equal distribution of wealth between its citizens.

Meanwhile, the party began to develop a strong organizational network, which was helped by a strong body of Nakshibendis extending their existing organizational networks to the party. By April 1973, the party had branches in fifty-two out of the sixty-seven provinces.[199] A month later, the party had branches in four hundred districts in sixty-three provinces and by July 1977, the party was organized in sixty-five provinces and in more than four hundred districts. The party also founded its own newspaper, the *Milli Gazete*, the National Newspaper. Throughout the 1970's the party received electoral and financial support from culturally alienated and conservative Muslims (the petty bourgeoisie) in small towns and villages.[200]

In 1976, Erbakan also founded the European National View Organization (Avrupa Milli Gorus Teskilati) for the purpose of creating a financial support base for his party among Turkish migrant workers in Western Europe. This would become the largest and most influential Islamist organization in Germany, and one of the most important Islamist movements operating within the Turkish diaspora in Europe. As of 2018, the movement (IGMG, it the German acronym) claims to operate over 2,330 mosques and cultural centers in eleven European countries, 323 of these are located in Germany. Its membership is about 127,000 with an estimated 30,000 members in Germany. The organization estimates that about 350,000 people in Europe attend its religious services

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[199] Ali Yasar Saribay, *Turkiye'de Modernlesme, Din ve Parti Politikasi: MSP Ornek Olayi* [Modernism, Religion and Party Politics: The Case of the National Salvation Party] (Istanbul: Alan Yayincilik, 1985)
[200] Emre, Siyasette 35 Yil, vol. 1, 182.

on a weekly basis.[201] An Islamist youth organization called Raiders (Akincilar), which was linked to the MSP, also emerged in the 1970's.[202] The MSP benefited both financially and organizationally from these network of religious associations, which included the Akincilar Dernegi (Raiders Association), Akinci Memurlar (Raider Civil Servants), Akinci Sporcular (Raider Athletes)[203]

In the 1970s, the MSP established itself as an important actor in Turkish political life. It surprisingly gained third place in the 1973 election, with 12 percent of the vote and 11 percent of the seats in parliament. [204] The MSP secured its electoral support mainly from small merchants and craftsmen in rural areas; conservative and deeply religious Muslims; and people of lower income in underdeveloped central and eastern Anatolian provinces. The party played a significant role in coalition politics between 1973 and 1980 as Erbakan served as deputy prime minister in both Bulent Ecevit (centre-left) and Suleyman Demirel (centre-right) governments. While the MSP soon became the organized Islamist expression of popular discontent, the Turkish scholar Ergin Yildizolglu notes: "a vibrant unofficial Islamist movement grew alongside it in the form of religion courses, associations, youth clubs, and charitable associations."[205]

The late 1970's was a period of short-lived and ideologically incompatible coalition governments, which were unable to curb the political violence of the radical leftist and ultranationalist groups. The military once again stepped in on September 12,

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[201] "Organisationsstruktur," ICMG website https://www.igmg.org/tr/hakkimizda/
[202] Birol Yesilada, "The Virtue Party", *Turkish Studies* 3, no.1, (2002): 62-81.
[203] M. Gunduz Sevilgen, MSP'de Dört Yıl (1973–1977) [Four Years in the MSP (1973–1977)] (Yüksel Matbası, 1980), 120–2.
[204] Fulya Atacan, "Explaining Religious Politics at the Crossroad: AKP-SP," *Turkish Studies 6*, no. 2 (2005): 187-199.
[205] Ronnie Marguiles and Ergin Yildizoglu, "The Resurgence of Islam and the Welfare Party in Turkey" in Political Islam: Essays from Middle East Report, eds Joel Beinin and Joe Stork (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 148.

1980, and the military junta that governed Turkey from 1980 to 1983 outlawed all existing political parties, including the MSP. Unlike the 1971 intervention, however, the 1980 military takeover was aimed at radically restructuring the legal and political framework of the country.[206] This was done with the 1982 constitution that strengthened executive power at the expense of civil liberties, in contrast to the liberal-democratic spirit that had characterized the 1961 constitution. In the aftermath of the coup, the military regime also manipulated the electoral laws aimed at excluding Kurdish, communist, and Islamist parties and transforming the system into a manageable two or three party system. A new electoral law passed in 1983, introduced a new 10 percent threshold for parliamentary representation. [207] In an interview with the author on July 22, 2019 retired General Sabri Yirmibesoglu argued that the military's efforts to engineer a more stable system did not materialize; on the contrary, it led to the partition of both the center right and center left, which was seized on as an opportunity by the Welfare party.[208] Moreover, it empowered proponents of the Turkish Islamic Synthesis, which had the unintentional effect of empowering the Islamist political movement.

State Accommodation of Islam in Turkey: The Turkish-Islamic Synthesis

Ironically, the Turkish military also contributed to the strengthening of religious parties in Turkey. The political opportunities exploited by Islamist political forces in the 1990's had its origins in a crucial policy choice made by the military government that took power on September 12, 1980. The National Security Council, which was headed by

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[206] Ümit Cizre Sakallioğlu, "The Anatomy of the Turkish Military's Political Autonomy." *Comparative Politics* 29, no. 2 (1997): 151–66.

[207] Ergun Özbudun, "The Turkish Party System: Institutionalization, Polarization, and Fragmentation." *Middle Eastern Studies* 17, no. 2 (April 1, 1981): 228–40.

[208] Author's Interview with Sabri Yirmibesoglu, Retired General from TAF, Ankara, July 22, 2019.

General Kenan Evren, ruled the country until November of 1983. In an effort to combat communism and leftist ideologies in the aftermath of the coup, the military government attempted to strengthen the role of Islam in Turkish society. Under this ideology adopted by the military, which came to be known as the "Turkish-Islamic Synthesis", state-run religious services were expanded, religious education was introduced as a compulsory subject in public schools, and the Diyanet, the state agency for religious affairs, was used for the "promotion of national solidarity and integration".[209] The leader of the Nurcu Fetullah Gulen congregation, Gulen himself commented that: "Because General Evren introduced a mandatory religion course, he can go to heaven even if he does not have any other good deeds."[210]

By using this framework, given the ideological polarization in society the military government believed that religion could be used as a unifying means and promoted a strand of Islam fused with Turkish nationalism.[211] In this context, certain Islamic groups were supported first by the military government and then by the center-right parties of the post-1980 era, namely the Motherland Party (ANAP) and the True Path Party (DYP). The military faced two types of Muslim communities: ordinary Muslims who had more or less absorbed the idea of secularism, and more religious people who were members of traditional Sunni Islamic orders. Rusen Cakir, a journalist and researcher in Islamic movements in Turkey, argues that during this period the military established a special relationship with the second group. According to him, the military would not create difficulties for this group, who in turn, would be expected to support the military's

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[209] Banu Eligur, *The Mobilization of Political Islam in Turkey* (London: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 85.
[210] "Zorunlu din dersi Evren'in sevabi" (Mandatory religious education is Evren's deed) Mehmet Gundem's interview with Fetullah Gulen, Milliyet, Jan 17, 2005, 14.
[211] Hakan Yavuz, "Political Islam and the Welfare Party", *Comparative Politics* 30, no. 1 (1997): 63-82.

policies.[212] The Islamic orders/congregations for their part were not deeply opposed to the coup, which ended the anarchy and weakened the movement of communism and atheism.

In effect, the military sought to institute a process of state controlled "Islamization from above." By combining Islamic symbols with Turkish nationalism, the military aimed to counter the process of political and social disintegration that had been ongoing since the 1970's and to shield the population from the influence of left-wing ideologies. In the process, the military granted Sunni Islam a discreet and important role in the country's sociopolitical development. In an interview with the author in July 2019, former politician from the left wing Labor Party, (TIP) Yildirim Kaya who was jailed during the period, defined the years as one in which: "Instead of explaining the pillars of Kemalist thought to the people, the military sought to fuse it with religion."[213]

Based on the concept of "the family, the mosque, and the barracks," this renewed emphasis on religious values was geared to bring the rebellious youth back into the folds of the establishment through emphasizing obedience to authority and fear of God. While designed to reduce the appeal of radical leftist ideologies, the Turkish-Islamic Synthesis also sought to diminish the influence of non-Turkish strands of Islamic thinking that had been gathering strength since the end of the 1960s, emanating especially from the Arab region and Pakistan. It also hoped to offer an ideological counterpart to offset the effects of the "Islamic Revolution" in Iran. [214]

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[212] Rusen Cakır, Ayet ve Slogan [Verse and Slogan] (Istanbul: Metis Yayınları, 1990), 292-93.
[213] Interview with Yildirim Kaya, Vice President of CHP for Party Organization, July 23, 2019.
[214] Cemal Karakas, "Turkey: Islam and Laicism Between the Interests of the State, Politics and Society", Report No. 78, Peace Research Institute Frankfurt (PRIF), 2007: 17–18.

In developing this synthesis, the military was inspired by the work of a group of conservative scholars who belonged to Intellectuals' Hearth, (Aydinlar Ocagi), a group with close links to the ultranationalist Nationalist Action Party (MHP).[215] This association formed a moral and philosophical rationale for the synthesis, building an ideology out of Ottoman, Islamic, and Turkish popular culture to legitimize the hegemony of the new ruling elite. Referring to the nation and state as a family and community, these scholars selectively used Ottoman-Islamic ideas to make the past relevant to the present and to bring together differing interests together by emphasizing the danger to family, nation, and state posed by ideological fragmentation. The educational system and the media were then used to disseminate a popularized version of the ideology to the masses.[216] In order to elicit the support of the masses, the state abandoned the official ideologies of "radical modernization" and "secular nationalism" which had not gained much traction to begin with, and adopted the "conservative modernist (muhafazakar modernist) and "populist Islamist" as one journalist wrote in an influential op-ed.[217]

Retired General Cevik Bir, who had a high-ranking position during the 1980 coup, stated in an interview with the author in July 2019 that the military supported the American green belt project.[218] Graham Fuller, the former CIA Middle East Policy Chair, while noting that "he was one of the most outspoken individuals in the project" explained the aim of the U.S. green belt project in an interview with the Turkish press in November

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[215] Bozkurt Guvenc et al. *Turk Islam Sentezi* [The Turkish-Islamic Synthesis] (Istanbul: Sarmal Press, 1991), 37.

[216] Angel Rabasa and Stephen Larrabee, *The Rise of Political Islam in Turkey* Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 2008.

[217] Tayfun Atay, July, The History of a Coup, Juy 14, 2019. https://t24.com.tr/yazarlar/tayfun-atay-pazar/15-temmuz-bir-dabbe-nin-tarihi-1,23130.

[218] Interview with Cevik Bir, July 23, 2019.

2004: "It was for containing Soviet expansion toward the south during the Cold War. I guess the idea was ours. But at the time all Muslim states understood that Islam was a very strong wall against communism."[219] Turkey was included in the green belt project, Fuller notes, because there was a very strong left in Turkey. The same was true for Iran. In the 1950's, 1960's and 1970's communism was a very strong movement in many parts of the developing world. And, in Turkey, Islam was not so effective against communism. Islam was weak and leftist movements was strong."[220]

In an interview with the author in July 2019, Tuğrul Türkeş, the son of the founder of Turkey's nationalist movement Alparslan Türkeş, who was himself an MP from the Nationalist Party, stated that many of the far-right nationalists who ended up being imprisoned and tortured following the military coup of 1980 questioned their loyalty to the Nationalist Party after being treated so harshly by the state they had considered themselves to be serving. There was already a debate within Turkey's nationalist movement between those who prioritized ethnic Turkish nationalism and others who argued for Muslim identity to play a more prominent role. The repression following the coup strengthened the position of the latter, and many of the nationalists who became disillusioned with the nationalist party became an attractive pool for recruitment by the Islamist parties.[221]

The Turkish-Islamic synthesis, however, sent an ambiguous message. On the one hand, under the 1982 constitution, Turkey was defined as a secular state, and the military stood as the ardent defenders of the secular principles of the Turkish Republic. It imposed

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[219] "Tarihi Itiraf," Devrim Samiray's interview with Graham Fuller, Vatan, November 1, 2004.
[220] "Tarihi Itiraf," Devrim Samiray's interview with Graham Fuller, Vatan, November 1, 2004.
[221] Author's interview with Tugrul Turkes, Deputy Prime Minister from 2015-2017 under the AKP, July 15, 2019.

state control over the Quran courses, dictated the content of the sermons delivered in mosques, and occasionally banned fundamentalist organizations. On the other hand, the role of religion was strengthened in schools and education as a means of reinforcing Turkish nationalism, which tended to weaken the emphasis on secularism. At the same time, it provided opportunities for the Islamists to expand and reinforce their own message. The military, by using Sunni Islam as an effective counterforce to the rise of communism in Turkey and by eliminating the leftist movement, served the interest of the Islamist groups and unintentionally created a political opportunity for Islamist mobilization. In doing so, they opened the door to participation, influence, and organizational activity by Islamist intellectuals, clergy, lay activists, and politicians, in other words the organizational and mobilization activities of a social movement. Later, when the military came to realize that social movements are not like troops that stop marching when ordered to stop, it was too late as the system by then had opened up to democratic politics. It was not until the February 28 decisions in 1997 that the military would once again find a rationale to intervene in the democratic process.[222]

The Era of Turgut Ozal: Socioeconomic Liberalization

In the aftermath of the military rule, Prime Minister Turgut Ozal who came to power in 1983 played a crucial role in the political, social and economic transformation of Turkey, including the empowerment of Islamist groups. Proud of his Kurdish ancestry, he was also rumored to be a member of the historical Naksibendi order.[223] He was a parliamentary candidate on the NSP ticket in the 1977 general elections. Under his

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[222] Binnaz Toprak, "Islam and Democracy in Turkey", *Turkish Studies* 6, no. 2 (2005): 187–199.
[223] Rusen Cakir, Ayet ve Slogan [Verse and Slogan] (Istanbul: Metis Yayınları, 1990), 17–47.

leadership, the newly founded Motherland Party (ANAP) won a surprisingly decisive victory in the parliamentary elections of fall 1983, with 45 percent of the vote. Ozal was Prime Minister from 1983 to 1989 and Turkey's President from 1989 until his death in 1993.[224]

By combining progress and pragmatism with a commitment to religion and tradition, Ozal, who was also a practicing Muslim himself, opened up new possibilities for the roles of Islam and the Ottoman heritage in contemporary Turkish society. As Hakan Yavuz notes: "He used Sufi orders, kinship ties and mosque associations to build dynamic ties with society, resulting in the adaptation of these traditional networks to a modern urban environment."[225] His minister of education, Vehbi Dincerler, a known Naksibendi disciple, prepared a new curriculum focusing on rewriting the presentation of national history and culture. In the new curriculum, the term "national" (milli) was often used in a religious sense. Ozal regarded Islam as a crucial component of the Turkish culture. He introduced the breaking of the fast (Iftar) during Ramadan to his administration and was the first Turkish Prime Minister to embark on the pilgrimage to Mecca in 1988.

At the same time, he was also very comfortable with Western leaders and a strong advocate of a Western-style liberal market economy. Ozal stressed that development was a nation's adoption of Western technology and science, while protecting its own culture.[226] Sencer Ayata notes, "The combination of economic liberalism with social

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[224] Sultan Tepe,, *Beyond Sacred and Secular: Politics of Religion in Israel and Turkey*. (Stanford University Press, 2008), 29.
[225] M. Hakan Yavuz, *Islamic Political Identity in Turkey* (New York, Oxford University Press, 2003), 75.
[226] Mehmet Barlas, "Turgut Ozal'in Anilari" [Turgut Ozal's Memoirs] (Istanbul: Sabah Kitaplari, 1994), 36.

conservatism was the cornerstone of Ozal's politics who was personally close to both the globally oriented economic elite as well as the Islamic brotherhood networks."[227]

Unlike the center right parties like the DP and its successor, the JP, both of which the Islamic brotherhoods lent support to, in the Motherland Party the Islamic brotherhoods constituted a major wing of the party. In an interview with the author in July 2019 Sencer Ayata pointed out that: "this was not a typical relationship between a political party and pressure groups. This extensive network of religious groups in the MP partly explains why the influence of Islamist groups in Turkey has become so overwhelming at the state level and in public life in general."[228] The inner core of Ozal's administration included leading members of the MSP and the Naksibendi order, as well as liberal, pro-market, and secularist politicians. The Naksibendi's were given privileged positions in the party, however, and this Islamic order emerged as the single most important lobbying group in politics.[229]

During ANAP rule, urbanization, universal education and the expanding economy brought new recruits, who had a greater empathy for Islamic values, into the state institutions which was a major break with the previous Turkish political experience. A large member of Ozal's cabinet members, also supported the Turkish-Islamic synthesis, and therefore encouraged religious expression and state support for religious institutions. While in power, one of ANAP's first acts was the legalization of charitable donations to

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[227] Ayata, Sencer. "Patronage, Party, and State: The Politicization of Islam in Turkey." *Middle East Journal* 50, no. 1 (1996): 40–56.
[228] Interview with Prof. Sencer Ayata at METU, July 29, 2019.
[229] Yavuz, M. Hakan. *Islamic Political Identity in Turkey*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 78.

religious institutions while also significantly increasing the number of imam-hatip

schools, Quran courses and mosques in Turkey.[230]

Ozal's economic liberalization program also resulted in a massive inflow of

foreign capital, albeit much of it coming from the Arab world. Thus, the 1980's

witnessed a profound take off in the volume and depth of Islamic financial activity as

Islamic financial institutions received a boost from the major inflow of Saudi capital that

took advantage of the new opportunities provided by financial deregulation. This new

inflow of Saudi capital played an important role in the mobilization of political Islam in

Turkey by allowing the Islamists to organize politically and be more economically

active.[231]

Ozal's reforms also opened up further avenues in the political arena for emerging

political groups, in particular the Islamists. Islamist groups gained access to important

media outlets and newspaper chains allowing them to reach a much broader political

audience. Similarly, broadcasting from their own television networks provided an

important means for propagating their message. New religious newspapers and journals,

as well as Islam-oriented radio and television stations attracted new followers and

stimulated intellectual debate about Islam and the relevance of Islamic political values to

social life. [232] At the same time, as a result of Ozal's reforms Muslim groups were also

allowed to officially finance the construction of private schools and universities. They

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[230] Rusen Cakir, Irfan Bozan and Balkan Talu, Imam Hatip Liseleri: Efsaneler ve Gercekler [The Imam Hatip High Schools: Myths and Realities] (Istanbul: TESEV Yayinlari, 2004.)
[231] Birol Yesilada, "Islamic Fundamentalism and the Saudi Connection" UFSI no.18 (1988-9): 1-11.
[232] Michael E. Meeker "The New Muslim Intellectual in the Republic of Turkey" in Richard Tapper (ed), (*Islam in Modern Turkey*, London: Tauris, 1991), 23.

handed out scholarships to students in schools and universities and established social services for the rural poor.[233]

Under Ozal's more tolerant approach to religion, and with the energizing effect of economic liberalization, the religious orders and brotherhoods, which had been previously banned, also received new freedoms while their popularity reached unprecedented levels.[234] Two religious orders have played a central part in the flourishing of social Islam in Turkey. One, led by Fetullah Gulen, is the order of the Fetullahcilar, the richest and most important offshoot of the Nurcu movement. The other, known as the Iskender Pasha community, is one of the various offshoots of the Naksibendi. Starting with the 1980's both religious orders were able to develop powerful and active networks in business, politics, the media and social and welfare services.

Most importantly, however, the Ozal era was characterized by a policy of opening markets. Prime Minister Ozal abandoned the import substitution model, under which Turkey tried to produce everything it needed and embraced a new one driven by export and global trade. He led a strategic export oriented program that unlocked the Turkish economy, opened the country to foreign investment and allowed the entrepreneurial skills of the Turkish public to flourish. Throughout the 1980's small and medium size businesses in Anatolia greatly benefited from the economic liberalization policies of Ozal's government. [235]

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[233] White, Jenny. *Islamist Mobilization in Turkey: A Study in Vernacular Politics*. (University of Washington Press, 2002), 96.

[234] Banu Eligür, *The Mobilization of Political Islam in Turkey*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 23.

[235] A. Kadir Yıldırım, Muslim Democratic Parties in the Middle East: Economy and Politics of Islamist Moderation. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2016), 23.

As a result of massive deregulation, a large number of companies emerged that were able to establish themselves on the world market as producers of, and suppliers for, export goods in the textile, leather, produce, construction and engineering industries. They created their own financial networks, organized themselves outside of the control of the state and in time, some even challenged the state-supported large industrialists. This economic upswing created a new middle class, the so-called "Anatolian bourgeoisie", which is deeply rooted in Turkish Islamic culture.

The backbone of this new bourgeoisie, also referred to as the "Anatolian tigers", is made up of Islamic-oriented entrepreneurs, family businesses and small and medium sized companies. Most of them were born and raised in provincial towns and villages and only settled in the big cities of Turkey after a college education. They were first introduced to Islamic values in their hometowns and later spent several years in university dormitories, mostly run by Nurcu or Naksibendi orders, where they became conscious Muslims.[236] Hakan Yavuz describes the role of Islam in the Anatolian tigers' economic activities: "Social trust, solidarity and loyalty are at the center of regional economic development successes. The shared culture produced by communal ties, Sufi networks, and village connections ease conflict and facilitate economic activity."[237] As this new class of Anatolian entrepreneurs gained economic power, they understandably sought political power as well. Hence, this significant rise of Islamic capital and provincial bourgeoisie provided the financial means for the Islamists political struggle and later constituted a strong financial base of support for the AKP.[238]

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[236] Hakan Yavuz, *The Emergence of a New Turkey: Islam, Democracy and the AK Party,* (Salt Lake City, UT: University of Utah Press), 5.
[237] Yavuz, M. Hakan.,*Islamic Political Identity in Turkey*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 80.
[238] Omer Taspinar, Kurdish Nationalism and Political Islam in Turkey (New York: Routledge, 2005), 115.

The Welfare Era: The Ascendancy of Political Islam

After the MSP was closed down by the military regime in 1981, the Islamist movement reorganized in 1983 under the name of the Welfare Party (RP). Despite repeated attempts by the state to curtail the growing Islamist movement, this judicial campaign had little practical effect as the Islamist political forces resurfaced under different names, with their banned leaders acting from behind the scenes. The Welfare Party's ideology was essentially the same as the previously banned MSP. Like the MSP, the Welfare party's message called for spiritual development based on Islam and material development based on industrialization.[239] The RP also criticized Turkey's Western oriented foreign policy and instead argued for closer integration with the Muslim world. The party was strongly opposed to Western influence and Turkey's membership in the European Union (EU), which Erbakan viewed as a "Christian Club".

The Welfare Party's economic program entitled "Just Order," stressed the need to address Turkey's economic and social problems by emphasizing social justice and equality while at the same time strengthening Islamic identity and moral values.[240] The Welfare's political discourse appealed in particular to people with low incomes, who had been left out of the economic upswing of the 1980's. The emphasis on social justice also resonated deeply with a majority of the Turkish people because by that time the state was characterized by widespread corruption, an alarmingly unequal distribution of wealth, and persistent unemployment. It was the successful framing efforts of party activists that tapped into the grievances held by many voters against prevalent corruption and the

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[239] Ihsan D. Dagı, *Kimlik, Söylem ve Siyaset: Dogu Batı Ayrımında Refah Partisi Gelenegi* [Identity and Politics: The Welfare's Perspective of the West] (Ankara: Imge Yayınevi, 1999), 23–5.
[240] Refah Partisi, Tek Cozum [The Only Soultion: The Welfare Party] (Ankara: Refah Partisi, 1987), 4-15.

dysfunctional state apparatus that played an important role in the later electoral success of the party.

Prior to that, as a result of the Turkish Islamic Synthesis and the economic liberalization of the 1980's the Islamist business class emerged as the wealthiest and best-organized group in society, which provided a lifeline to the Welfare Party's organizational skills and resources. By 1987, the WP had established party networks in all sixty-seven provinces and six hundred districts.[241] By the 1990's the WP had the most comprehensive party network in Turkey, starting from the provinces down to the level of electoral precincts. Each electoral precinct was based on a single street, making clear the scope of the WP network.[242] The WP network consisted of a hierarchy of organizations, beginning at the top with the WP headquarters and the General Governing Council, which worked actively with party members. There were discussion commissions composed of experts and there was a special staff of teacher inspectors controlling the activities of party staff. The party had a council (divan) in every district comprising fifty regular and fifty alternate members. In neighborhoods, the party had a representative and a co-representative. Under each neighborhood representative, there was one precinct chief observer (basmusahit) and four observers who maintained a database of information on everyone living in the area, including the details of each family unit. In some areas, there were even representatives for each apartment building, who paid visits and spread the party's message. [243]

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[241] Banu Eligür, *The Mobilization of Political Islam in Turkey*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 184.
[242] Delibas, Kayhan. *Rise of Political Islam in Turkey, The: Urban Poverty, Grassroots Activism and Islamic Fundamentalism*. (1 edition. I.B.Tauris, 2014), 43.
[243] Author's Interview with Lutfiye Cam, Head of the Women's Branch of the AKP, July 2019.

In 1990, these Anatolian businesses formed their own organization, the Independent Industrialists and Businessmen's Association (MUSIAD). Unlike the Istanbul-based, secular TUSIAD, MUSIAD represented small and mid-sized companies based both in Istanbul and Anatolian provinces. MUSIAD served as a "catalyzer" for the international assimilation of provincial entrepreneurs by facilitating integration with trade markets in Europe, Central and East Asia, North Africa, and the Middle East while also extending its organizational network to eastern and southeastern Turkey, an underdeveloped region where industrialists were looking for someone to represent their interests. MUSIAD has been very active in training its members, serving as a "socioeconomic school" as defined by Ali Bayramoglu, its former chair.[244]

MUSIAD provides a wide range of services to its members, ranging from organizing international conferences where members can establish connections with foreign businessmen, to publishing periodicals disseminating technology and market related information. In contrast to TUSIAD, MUSIAD aims to create a feeling of solidarity among its members by emphasizing Islamic identity as the basis for cooperation and trade. The association uses Islam as a strategic resource for strengthening its own identity, promoting networking among members, and lobbying for its own interests with state authorities. In turn, the organization has experienced substantial growth in size and power over a short period, and since it's founding in 1990 with 12 members, MUSIAD has grown to represent nearly ten thousand enterprises in 2015, which together employed roughly half a million people.[245]

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[244] Kadir Yıldırım, *Muslim Democratic Parties in the Middle East: Economy and Politics of Islamist Moderation*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2016), 34.
[245] Nilufer Narli, "The Rise of the Islamist Movement in Turkey" MEIRA Journal 3, no.3 (1999): 38-48.

By the mid-1980's, the public had increasingly become receptive to appeals by the religious activists. The religious orders, particularly the Suleymanci and the Naksibendi, were involved in a range of activities. Quran courses brought in the very young; university entrance examination courses, where students received free tuition and lived in hostels run by orders, attracted the educated youth of the future; recruitment among students of the military academies was aimed at gaining influence within the armed forces. Mosques and their attendant religious associations represented direct channels of neighborhood organization and recruitment. All the tarikats were involved in these activities, and the organizational capacity of the Islamist political movement, in particular the Welfare Party, benefited greatly from this religious associational landscape. Islamist activists seized on the favorable climate created by the Turkish Islamic Synthesis as an opportunity to establish strong organizational networks and lay the groundwork for their election victories in the 1990's.

In the 1987 elections, Welfare received 7.16 percent of the vote, short of the 10 percent needed for representation in parliament. As a result, the Islamists were not represented as a separate party in parliament during the 1980s. Many of Welfare's followers joined Ozal's ANAP, which brought together members from both the Islamist front and secular conservatives. In the 1990's, however, the Welfare Party's vote rose rapidly. It was no longer a party of the rural and semi-developed areas, as had been the case in the 1970's. Its political influence continued to grow as it won the mayor's office in 28 municipalities (out of 76), including Turkey's two largest cities, Istanbul and Ankara, with over 19 percent of the national vote in the 1994 local elections.[246] The 21.4

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[246] Haldun Gulalp, "Globalization and Political Islam: The Social Bases of Turkey's Welfare Party" International Journal of Middle East Studies 33, no.3 (2001): 433-48.

percent of the national vote and 158 parliamentary seats (in the 550 seat parliament) the

Welfare party won in the December 1995 parliamentary elections represented the party's

best national showing ever, making it the largest in the parliament.[247]

The result of the December 1995 general elections came as a shock to the secular

establishment, especially the military. For the first time in republican history, a pro-

Islamist party, the Welfare Party, had won the majority of the votes. After a short-lived

coalition government of center-right political parties, Necmettin Erbakan, the leader of

the Welfare, formed a coalition government with the center-right True Path Party (DYP).

Several factors contributed to Welfare Party's strong showing. Perhaps most important

was a shift in Welfare's political agenda, which put stronger emphasis on social issues

rather than religious themes. The Welfare party's focus on unemployment, social justice,

and clean government allowed it to broaden its appeal beyond the hard-core religious

right. [248]

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[247] Hakan M. Yavuz, "Political Islam and the Welfare (Refah) Party in Turkey." *Comparative Politics* 30, no. 1 (1997): 63–82.
[248] Hakan Yavuz, "Political Islam and the Welfare Party", *Comparative Politics* 30, no. 1 (1997): 63-82.

Figure 3.1 History of Religious Parties in Turkey

1950s	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000s
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

MNP   N P   SP

Active in center-right parties   I   MSP   RP   FP

                                                                    AKP

I Erbakan and friends as independent MPs
MNP Milli Nizam Partisi (National Order Party)
MSP Milli Selamet Partisi (National Salvation Party)
N P No political parties allowed by National Security Council

RP Refah Partisi (Welfare Party)
FP Fazilet Partisi (Virtue Party)
SP Saadet Partisi (Felicity Party)
AKP Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (Justice and Development Party)

The WP was particularly successful at mobilizing the urban poor, who suffered from the disruptive effects of the economic liberalization policies of the 1980s that had intensified already serious income and wealth disparities. Whereas the vote of the urban poor largely went to the leftist movements in the 1970s, it was transferred to the Welfare Party in the 1980s and the 1990s. [249] The party by developing concrete anti-poverty projects and responding to the demands of the urban poor living mainly in shantytowns (gecekondu) significantly expanded its support base throughout the 1990's. The Welfare also benefitted from the rise of the Islamic groups and capital that originated in the state's revaluation of Islamic identity under the Turkish-Islamic Synthesis and under Ozal's policies, as well as from the support of the "Anatolian bourgeoisie". These groups were

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[249] Binnaz Toprak, "Islam and Democracy in Turkey", *Turkish Studies* 6, no. 2 (2005): 187–199.

strong financial supporters of the Welfare, which also helped the party in achieving its organizational efficiency. [250]

Welfare was the best organized of all the political parties, with an army of devout Muslims, especially women, who did volunteer work for the party and provided a network of social welfare such as food, shelter, health benefits and jobs as well as financial contributions to social occasions like weddings to help the poor. The party's grassroots organization was extremely effective, emphasizing face-to-face contacts with potential voters, working in the gecekondu and other poor urban areas.[251] In Sultanbeyli, for example, a long neglected shantytown in Istanbul, the Welfare Party had already gained power in 1989. The size of the electorate there increased from 8,937 in 1989 to 43,700 in 1994, a reflection of the massive immigration to the cities of Turkey, the resulting growth of shantytowns in them, and the corresponding increase in the size of the urban constituency available for mobilization by the Islamist parties. In the 1989 local elections the party received 30 percent of the votes; in the 1994 elections, it secured nearly 60 percent of the votes. The WP's successful work in Sultanbeyli created a good reputation for the party and convinced voters in other districts to vote for them.[252]

The Islamists had shown themselves capable of good municipal administrators and were noted for their lack of corruption. The Welfare Party's successful governance of municipalities over which they gained control in the 1994 elections (e.g. Ankara and Istanbul) played a crucial role in convincing voters that the party's slogan of Just Order

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[250] Hasan Huseyin Ceylan, *Erbakan ve Turkiye'nin Temel Meseleleri* [Erbakan and Turkey's Essential Issues], 5th ed. (Ankara: Rehber Yayincilik, 1996).

[251] White, Jenny. *Islamist Mobilization in Turkey: A Study in Vernacular Politics*. (University of Washington Press, 2002), 43.

[252] Akinci, Ugur. "The Welfare Party's Municipal Track Record: Evaluating Islamist Municipal Activism in Turkey." *Middle East Journal* 53, no. 1 (1999): 75–94.

presented a credible promise to create an alternative to the present system rampant with corruption and unable to address the society's socioeconomic problems.[253]

While in office, Erbakan, who had returned to politics following the 1987 referendum that ended the ban on politicians who had served in the pre-1980 period, was a source of continuing controversy. Instead of pursuing policies designed to reduce social tensions, Erbakan's rhetoric on domestic controversies, such as the headscarf issue, and his proposals one of which was the construction of a grand mosque in Taksim Square, further polarized Turkish society along secular vs. Islamic lines.[254] While in office, he rallied against the imperial character of the Christian West, denounced the EU as a Christian Club and urged a Turkish pullout from NATO. Additionally, he consistently articulated his suspicion of the role of Jewish forces in influencing international politics and his strong criticism of Israel's regional policies, including Turkey's alliance with it.

Erbakan also worked closely with the European branches of the National View, as mentioned above an Islamist movement he had started in the 1970's that had grown to more than a thousand public branches providing a direct source of funding for the Welfare Party from Turkish immigrant communities throughout Europe.[255] Because the Turkish state had ignored the religious needs of the Turkish migrants in Europe, the European branch of the National View, known by its Turkish acronym AMGT, filled this gap. By the mid-1980's the AMGT was not only answering the religious needs of

[253] Haldun Gulalp, "Globalization and Political Islam: The Social Bases of Turkey's Welfare Party" International Journal of Middle East Studies 33, no.3 (2001): 433-48.

[254] Hakan Yavuz, *Islamic Political Identity in Turkey* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 241.

[255] Graham E. Fuller, *The New Turkish Republic: Turkey as a Pivotal State in the Muslim World* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2008.), 42.

Turkish migrants, but also dealing with their problems in the workplace and providing them with social assistance as well as solidarity. [256]

However, the Welfare-DYP government's policies soon created serious frictions with the military, the secular establishment, and most of the leading civil society organizations. The process that started with the dramatic meeting of the National Security Council on 28 February 1997, at which military commanders strongly criticized the government and demanded strict measures against anti-secular activity by presenting Erbakan with an eighteen-point plan to curb the Islamist movement, forced the resignation of the Erbakan government, and eventually the prohibition of the Welfare Party by the Constitutional Court in 1998, for having violated the secular principles of the Turkish constitution. After this period, the military abandoned the idea that religion could be used to consolidate society, and the Turkish-Islamic synthesis lost its prominent role as an official ideology.[257]

Meanwhile, the so-called "Islamic capital" was boycotted and prosecuted to eliminate financial sources for the Islamic movement. The army released a list of close to one hundred corporations, which were to come under investigation as financial supporters of the Islamist movement. These organizations along with a list of 19 newspapers, 20 national and local television stations, 51 radio stations and 1,200 student fraternities were branded as engaging in "subversive Islamic activities".[258] The imprisonment of Tayyip Erdogan, the then popular mayor of Istanbul, was another means by which pressure over the Islamists was exerted. He was sentenced to a ten-month prison term in April 1998 for

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[256] Selahattin Altun, "Amacimiz Islam Kardesligi" (Our goal is the brotherhood of Islam), Milli Gazete, September 2, 1987.

[257] Haldun Gulalp, "The Poverty of Democracy in Turkey: The Refah Party Episode*," New Perspectives on Turkey* 21 (1999): 46.

[258] Yavuz, M. Hakan. *Islamic Political Identity in Turkey*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 65.

having given a speech that was considered as "inciting religious hatred" by the secular establishment. Moreover, many of the Koran courses run by various Islamic foundations were closed down, while the remaining courses along with Islamic NGOs and foundations were put under strict control.[259]

Following the February 28 process, the military reaffirmed its commitment to Kemalism, while Islam's social and economic bases, as well as its political agents, were targeted. The Welfare Party was the third party of the National View Movement that was closed down and its leader, Erbakan, was barred from politics once again for five years by the decision of the Constitutional Court. [260] Despite the military's intervention, the Islamist movement, however, which had firmly established itself with its strong organizational networks and its significant political constituency capable of resisting suppression by the military, could not be eliminated. Soon after, the Welfare Party was replaced by the Virtue Party (FP), which was led by Recai Kutan. However, the FP could not sustain the WP's popularity and received around 15 per cent of the vote in the 1999 elections. Even though the FP was more moderate than its predecessors, the Constitutional Court also closed down the FP in 2001, which eventually led to a split in the Islamist movement.

The period beginning with the meeting on February the 28th had an important impact on the orientation and development of the Islamist movement in Turkey.[261] It underscored the fact that a direct, head-on attempt to push an overt Islamic agenda could

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[259] Sultan Tepe, *Beyond Sacred and Secular: Politics of Religion in Israel and Turkey*. (Stanford University Press, 2008), 89.

[260] Fulya Atacan, "28 Subat 1997: Turk Islam Sentezi'nin Sonu" [28 February 1997: End of the Turkish Islamic Synthesis], in Fulya Atacan, Fuat Ercan, Hatice Kurtulus and Mehmet Turkay (eds.), *Mubeccel Kıray Icin Yazılar* (Istanbul: Baglam Yaınları, 2000), 113–38.

[261] Nevzat Bolugiray, 28 Subat Sureci [The February 28th Process] (Istanbul: Tekin Yayinevi, 2000), 20.

not succeed and would generate strong opposition from the secularists, especially the military. The Islamists realized that challenging the secular state would involve serious economic, political and personal risks. As a result, the leadership emerged from the February 28th process with a much clearer understanding about the red lines of Turkish secularism and the limits of Turkish democracy. Many members of the Islamist movement also concluded that the only way the Islamists could succeed was by avoiding a direct confrontation with the secularists and deemphasizing the religious agenda. This recognition sparked an intense internal debate and rethinking within the Islamic movement about the movement's future political strategy, and a growing political division emerged within the movement between two different groups. [262]

It became clear that the party was divided into two: the old guards close to Erbakan and the young members of parliament asking for a renewal of the party's leadership, ideology and image. The "traditionalists", centered around Erbakan and his chief lieutenant Recai Kutan, who opposed any serious change in approach or policy, while a younger group of "reformists", led by Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the mayor of Istanbul, and his close associate Abdullah Gul, argued that the party needed to rethink its approach to a number of fundamental issues, particularly democracy, human rights, and relations with the West.[263]

By that time, the younger generation had also realized that ideologically driven platforms had both limited public appeal and rendered their parties vulnerable to state repression. They therefore argued for developing a centrist platform with cross cutting

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[262] Yavuz Selim, *Yol Ayrımı* [Crossroads] (Ankara: Hiler Yayınları, 2002), 52.

[263] Kalaycioglu, Ersin. "Justice and Development Party at the Helm: Resurgence of Islam or Restitution of the Right-of-Center Predominant Party?" *Turkish Studies* 11 (March 1, 2010): 29–44.

appeal while accommodating the secularist forces as well. In turn, the group that called themselves "reformists" established the Justice and Development Party (AKP) under the leadership of Erdogan, on August 14, 2001 while the traditionalists organized under the name of Felicity Party (SP) led by Recai Kutan. The subsequent success of the AKP in the 2002 election is the topic of the next chapter.

In conclusion, the coming to power of the Welfare Party in 1996 represented a significant political success for the Islamist movement in Turkey. The electoral victory of Welfare was based on the strong organizational networks established by the party with the support of the Nakshibendi and Nurcu brotherhoods, and later the Milli Gorus apparatus as well as the space created for their organizing activities by the Turkish Islamic Synthesis as a de facto political ideology in the 1980's and the economic liberalization of the Ozal era. Finally, as will be discussed in more detail in chapter four, the new leaders that emerged from the Islamist movement of the 1990's built a personalistic mass-party, framed their grievances against corrupt state elites by focusing on socio-economic issues and thus broadening their appeal beyond religious voters. The next section describes, the parallel set of dynamics behind the rise of the Hindu nationalist party, the BJP, as the Congress party's instrumental use of religion opened up space for Hindu nationalists to enter politics more forcefully, and the BJP emerged as an important political actor from the 1996 elections strengthened by the organizational resources of the family of Hindu associations, the Sangh Parivar, that had been laying the ideological groundwork for the party for years.

Religious Mobilization in India

Hindu Nationalism Becomes Mainstream

Just like the Islamist movement in Turkey, the resurgence of Hindu nationalism was a defining feature of Indian politics in the 1990's. Although the ideas and organizations associated with the trend have roots in the early twentieth century, they were politically marginalized for much of the post-Independence period. Even in the 1980's the BJP was capable of winning only two seats in the 1984 elections.[264] Yet, by 1991, the BJP was the second largest party in the country and by 1998 it was leading the ruling coalition. Perhaps more important, the ideology of Hindu nationalism, or Hindutva, had become part of the ideological mainstream. What had happened in the intervening years that had allowed for the reemergence of a set of ideas and organizations that had not held much sway among the Indian population for many years?

Just like the Turkish Islamic Synthesis adopted by the military opened up space for the Islamist movement in Turkey, the Congress party's leadership's embrace of an exclusive religious politics and mobilization strategies based on symbols of community beginning in the 1980's gave the organizations associated with Hindu nationalism a credibility they had historically lacked and paved the way for the rise of the BJP. The BJP then capitalized on this historic opportunity as well as the Ayodhya agitation by tapping into the extensive networks provided to them for political mobilization by the family of Hindu associations, the Sangh Parivar, and the RSS (Rashtriya Swayamsevak

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[264] Hansen, Thomas Blom. *The Saffron Wave: Democracy and Hindu Nationalism in Modern India*. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), 128.

Sangh) in particular, which had benefited from decades of disciplined, well-planned organizational and ideological expansion.[265]

In the years immediately following independence, the Indian government, led by its first prime minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, promoted a secular vision of modernity. The government's support for secular norms and identities explained in more detail in the previous chapter was based on the notion that an inclusive understanding of the nation was necessary for integrating India's diverse ethnic and religious groups into a common political framework.[266] A secular vision of nationalism was also institutionalized in India's first constitution. This commitment to an inclusive order faded, however, with Nehru's death in 1964, especially after the emergency period (1975-1977). During this latter era, Congress leaders abandoned Nehru's secular vision and sought to coopt the rhetoric and symbols of Hindu nationalism for their own political purposes.[267] Unlike Nehru, Indira Gandhi and her son Rajiv, appealed to the religious sentiments of the majority population and portrayed the Congress party as the only party capable of defending the Hindu nation and restoring order. The religious politics of Indira and Rajiv Gandhi era was part of a new strategy to mobilize support among communal instead of class lines. Although this majoritarian strategy worked for the Congress party in the short term, most obviously in the 1984 electoral landslide, similar to the Turkish Islamic Synthesis it helped to weaken the secular norms that had governed Indian public life for most of the post-Independence era.

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[265] Shashi Tharoor, "India's Cult of Modi by Shashi Tharoor." Project Syndicate, May 28, 2019.
[266] B. Shiva Rao. *The Framing Of India's Constitution A Study*. (Indian Institute of Public Administration, 1968), 156.
[267] Hasan, Mushirul, ed. *Will Secular India Survive*. (Gurgaon, Haryana: Imprint One, 2004), 126.

The Congress Dynasty: The Instrumental Use of Religion after Nehru

As the first Prime Minister of India, Nehru worked continuously to facilitate the institutionalization of secularism in public life. One such measure was a law adopted in 1951 that specifically forbade the use of religious symbols "or the invocation of the threat of divine displeasure during an election campaign."[268] Other laws passed during the first session of the Indian Parliament, as mentioned in Chapter 2, amended, and attempted to standardize Hindu personal law. Similarly, Nehru pushed through a piece of legislation in the mid-1950's, the Citizenship Act, that emphasized the inclusive nature of national identity by extending the right of citizenship to any immigrant from Pakistan, regardless of religious affiliation.

These bills sparked strong opposition among Hindu nationalists, who portrayed them as having an "anti-Hindu" bias or "appeasing Muslims". The legislation reforming Hindu personal law, for example was described as a "threat to the stability and integrity of traditional forms of marriage and family in Hindu society."[269] Communal groups opposed the Citizenship Act because it extended the rights of citizenship to Muslim refugees. What was remarkable about these debates at the time, however, was the ineffectiveness of the Hindu nationalists. Nehru was able to define and frame the debate and to characterize his opponents as sectarian, divisive, and antinational. Moreover, the governments' willingness to confront the Mahashaba, the Jana Sangh (the first political party created by Hindu nationalists in 1951) and other communalist elements played a decisive role in limiting their mobilization. Hindu activists were arrested and detained,

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[268] Hibbard, Scott W. *Religious Politics and Secular States: Egypt, India, and the United States*. (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), 22.

[269] Rajeev Bhargava, *The Promise of India's Secular Democracy*. (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2010), 48.

limiting their ability to mobilize the Hindu population on such sensitive issues as the Ayodha mosque, the treatment of Hindus in Pakistan and cow protection.

The formation of the Jana Sangh in 1951 took place as a compromise between two clusters of disparate interests. On the one hand, there was a group of experienced politicians and leaders rooted in the Hindu Mahashaba and Arya Samaj, both Hindu organizations founded in the late 19th century. On the other hand, there was the RSS leadership, generally hostile to the entire democratic notion of fighting out social differences in public arenas.[270] The motivation on the part of the RSS for entering the political sphere seems to have been the chance to acquire a public voice, and public legitimacy and, ultimately, to extend the influence of the organization through its political affiliate. In 1948, the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi by a former RSS member resulted in a ban on the organization and the arrest of 20,000 RSS volunteers, swayamsevaks. Those who had gone underground then discovered that no major political force was prepared to advocate the cause of the RSS in parliament or elsewhere. It was many of these RSS activists, who realized the importance of having access to political power that recommended their movement become involved in politics. The first elections manifesto was thus a carefully worked out document outlining the common ideological positions of the disparate groups in the new party: India should be viewed as an indivisible organic unit, based on a common culture with ancient roots in history.[271]

The Jana Sangh's inability to generate a mass following also showed the weakness of Hindu nationalism during the 1950's and early 1960's. The party focused on

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[270] Thomas Bloom Hansen, *The Saffron Wave: Democracy and Hindu Nationalism in Modern India*. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), 158.

[271] Ashutosh Varshney, ed. *India and the Politics of Developing Countries: Essays in Memory of Myron Weiner*. 1 edition. New Delhi ; Thousand Oaks, Calif: SAGE Publications Pvt. Ltd, 2004.

issues of national unity such as the campaign against the division of Punjab on linguistic lines (1955-57), or the campaign for the use of Hindi as a national language (1958-65), and the anti-cow slaughter campaign from the 1950's onward.[272] These efforts reinforced the image of the Jana Sangh as a sectarian party outside the mainstream of politics as defined by Congress and the moderate left. The appeals of the party were limited to upper class segments of the middle class and among culturally conservative segments in the formerly princely states. Moreover, the government's active opposition to communal agitation had effectively deterred the communalists and their call for a Hindu Rashtra.

When rioting broke out in the early 1960's for example, Nehru responded with force. Recognizing that these riots had been carefully planned and organized, Nehru ordered his state ministers to detain communalist organizers and prevent them from doing further harm. He also sought to constrain religious appeals by sectarian parties. Just before the 1962 elections, for example, the government announced its intention to strengthen the 1951 law that prohibited the use of religion in electoral campaigns by extending the prohibition to any language that "promoted the disaffection among the people on the grounds of religion, race, caste or language."[273] These constraints severely curtailed the activities of the Jana Sangh and kept them from explicitly "playing the Hindu card." Although the party's supporters remained committed to the ideas of Hindu Rashtra, the communal discourse was downplayed at the national level, reflecting the parameters of what was perceived as permissible debate.

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[272] Thomas Blom Hansen, *The Saffron Wave: Democracy and Hindu Nationalism in Modern India*. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), 129

[273] Jayal, Niraja Gopal, and Pratap Bhanu Mehta. *The Oxford Companion to Politics in India: Student Edition*. Student ed edition. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2011.

Nehru's death in 1964 presented a series of challenges to Congress Party rule and highlighted the deep divisions that continued to exist within the Congress Party. The polarization between the left-of-center secularists and the more conservative traditionalists had been exacerbated by the economic policies of the 1950's. Nehru's efforts to reform the agricultural sector had alienated large segments of the economic elite. This helped to coalesce right wing opposition to the broader program of state led development.[274] The emphasis on socioeconomic justice, which had characterized the early reformist period, had given way to patronage politics. The Congress party was now increasingly seen as dedicated to the pursuit of patronage, and the spoils of office, not poverty alleviation or social reform.

The 1967 elections were a disaster for the Congress Party. Although it retained power at the federal level, the Congress Party lost a large number of seats in the Lok Sabha and also lost control of several state governments, in effect ending the Congress dominance since Independence. In the meantime, a decisive reorientation of Jana Sangh in a more populist direction took place from 1965 onward, and this strategy paid off in the 1967 elections when the party was able to exploit the unprecedented weakness of the Congress and secure 35 seats in the Lok Sabha and more than 9 percent of the total vote.

In November 1969, the Congress party split into rival organizations and the more reformist wing headed by Indira Ghandi, Nehru's daughter, came to power in the 1971 elections. Indira was able to refocus the 1971 campaign on the core themes of Congress legitimacy: socioeconomic reform, secularism and socialism. Indira Gandhi's tenure, however, was deeply problematic and marred by pervasive discontent among the

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[274] Chandra, Bipan, Aditya Mukherjee, and Mridula Mukherjee. *India Since Independence*. (Penguin Books India, 2008), 43.

population. Widespread strikes, demonstrations, and protests ultimately led Indira Ghandi to issue a state of emergency in June 26, 1975, briefly putting India's democratic experiment on hold.[275] Similar to the aftermath of the 1980 military intervention in Turkey, during emergency rule in India, tens of thousands of leaders and activists of opposition parties, spanning the diverse spectrum from the Hindu nationalist Jana Sangh to Marxists, were arrested and imprisoned, along with thousands of journalists and intellectuals.[276] The press was censored, the government controlled the national radio and there was limited television service. This period also reinforced the importance of gaining access to political power and hence building a broader political coalition to members of the Hindu nationalist movement.

When elections were finally held in March 1977, not only did Congress lose but Indira Gandhi lost her seat in the Lok Sabha. The so-called Janata Front coalition that took power in 1977 did not last long because of factional feuds and when elections were called in January 1980, Congress swept into office and Indira Gandhi was back in power. The defeat of the Janata party and the disenchantment within the RSS with the Janarta experiment resulted in the formation of a new political affiliate of the RSS, the Bharatiya Janata Party in April 1980. The RSS had expected to work closely with the government, but other forces in the Janata party allowed the RSS to play only a circumscribed role.[277] This new party, the BJP, led by Atal BihariVajpayee and his populist wing, claimed to be the true inheritor of the spirit of the Janata Party.

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[275] Ranji Kothari, *State Against Democracy: In Search of Humane Governance*. Delhi: South Asia Books, 1988.

[276] Sumit Ganguly and Rahul Mukherji. *India Since 1980*. 1 edition. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011.

[277] Bruce Desmond Graham, "Hindu Nationalism and Indian Politics by Bruce Desmond Graham." Cambridge University Press, October 1990.

The Emergency and its aftermath were emblematic of a deeper crisis in India's democracy. After 1975, Indira Gandhi set out to consolidate her own weak position by creating a new parallel system of authority in the party based on loyalty to her personal leadership. The formal structures in the party were bypassed, internal elections were continuously postponed and stalled, and large groups of inexperienced politicians made fast careers by virtue of their unconditional loyalty to the central leadership. In an interview with the author, Ronojoy Sen, a Senior Fellow at the Institute of South Asian Studies at the National University of Singapore, pointed out that this process was remarkably similar to what has happened to the BJP under Modi's leadership. This centralization of state power and the demise of the Congress Party as an institution eroded the government's ability to address local needs and problems. Associated with these authoritarian tendencies was Mrs. Gandhi's articulation of a nationalist discourse rooted in religious communalism and fear of minority separatism.[278]

The turbulence of the 1970's, particularly the poor's disaffection from the party created a crisis of legitimacy to which the ruling party had to respond. It did so by using religious symbols, stigmatizing dissenting voices as threats to national unity and portraying Congress as the only group capable of protecting the community. Indira's appropriation of the traditional Hindu nationalist demands, which was targeted against religious minorities, especially Muslims and Sikhs paid off in the mid-1983 elections in Jammu and Kashmir, as well as Delhi and so it was broadened in the 1984 election.[279] By depicting the separatist tendencies and minority grievances that had emerged under her

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[278] Scott W. Hibbard, *Religious Politics and Secular States: Egypt, India, and the United States*. (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), 130.

[279] Hansen, Thomas Blom. *The Saffron Wave: Democracy and Hindu Nationalism in Modern India*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999.

rule as "anti-national", Indira was able to marshal the Hindu majority behind her government. In early June of 1984, she ordered the Indian army to retake the Golden Temple from the Sikh radicals encamped there. The operation turned into a bloodbath, and 83 military personnel and 492 Sikhs were dead. Ranji Kothari, in his book *State against Democracy* published in the late 1980's writes of the period: "Mrs. Gandhi said openly that Hindu dharma (faith) was under attack."[280]

There were several important features of this new discourse. First, it was intended to redirect populist mobilization along communal not class lines. The democratization of the 1950's and the 1960's had politicized the population and built a strong base of support for the leftist program of social reform.[281] These forces, however, became frustrated as the opportunities for advancement remained closed and state led development failed to raise living standards. The state could not allow the continued mobilization along class lines, so it sought to shift public discourse away from socioeconomic issues to those of faith and nation. In a way, the party developed a new strategy that relied on popular support from the Hindu majority, particularly the middle classes of the Hindi heartland. This strategy was based on sidelining the BJP by appropriating both its message and its base of support.[282]

A second feature of this new discourse was its religious imagery and its clear appeal to the Hindu majority. This was evident from Mrs. Gandhi's public demonstration of religious devotion, as she visited temples around the country. In the early 1980's she also articulated a much more nationalist rhetoric, one of a "nation in danger" threatened

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[280] Kothari, Rajni. *State Against Democracy: In Search of Humane Governance*. Delhi: South Asia Books, 1988.

[281] K. N. Panikkar, *Communalism in India: History, Politics, and Culture*. Manohar Publ., 1991.

[282] Thomas Blom Hansen,. *The Saffron Wave: Democracy and Hindu Nationalism in Modern India*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999.

by internal and external enemies, and increasingly "anti-national" minorities. In a 1983 speech for example, Mrs. Gandhi noted that in "certain places" code for Kashmir and Punjab, minority populations have been guaranteed rights and privileges while the "majority was being suppressed."[283] In another speech, in November 1983 to the Arya Samaj she explicitly stated that the country's religion and traditions were under attack.[284] This theme was reiterated consistently, in speeches she gave around the country. The following year, in the aftermath of an assault on the Golden Temple in Amitsar, she appealed to the audience to save Hindu tradition "from the attack that was coming from the Sikhs, Muslims, and others."[285]

The instrumental use of religion by Indian state officials and India's next prime minister Rajiv Gandhi continued throughout the 1980's and the 1990's as Congress party leaders consistently sought to coopt the ideas and rhetoric of Hindu nationalism for their own political ends. The Congress Party's strategy in the 1984 elections played up these communal tensions as a means of building support among the Hindu majority. Rajiv Gandhi had called for national elections in the weeks after his mother's assassination, in part to take advantage of the sympathy factor but her death was also used to underscore the dangers of minority separatism and to depict India as a nation in mortal danger. On the campaign trail, Rajiv raised the specter of Sikh and Muslim separatism as a significant threat to the national community.[286] Fear, religion and nationalism were central elements of his majoritarian strategy. In one speech, Rajiv claimed that "external

[283] Indira Ghandi, cited in "Elections-Congress(I) and Minorities." *Economic and Political Weekly* 19, no. 50 (June 5, 2015): 7–8.
[284] "Elections-Congress(I) and Minorities," p.208.
[285] Klieman, Aaron S. "Indira's India: Democracy and Crisis Government." *Political Science Quarterly* 96, no. 2 (1981): 241–59.
[286] Sumantra Bose, "Hindu Nationalism and the Crisis of the Indian State," in Panikkar, K. N. *Communalism in India: History, Politics, and Culture*. (Manohar Publ., 1991), 103.

forces were responsible for the murder of Indira Gandhi" and that these forces were continuing to provide financial and material support to the separatist groups inside of India.[287]

Another turning point was the Shah Bano case in the mid-1980's. Shah Bano a Muslim woman from a provincial city in the State of Madhya Pradesh filed for maintenance after being divorced by her husband simply by saying the word talaq three times. The husband argued that maintenance was not required under Islamic law. Shah Bano sought protection under the country's civil law, not the Islamic personal code. The Supreme Court weighed in on the matter and rendered a decision that upheld the country's civil code over the personal laws of the Muslim community.[288] Faced with a backlash from the Muslim community, Rajeev Gandhi first supported the Court but then to appease Muslim sentiment he ordered his party to pass a law, the Muslim Women Act in the Lok Sabha that made Sharia (Islamic personal law) superior to the civil law in matters concerning the maintenance of divorced woman.

A Hindu storm consequently erupted and this time in order to soothe the Hindu nationalists Rajeev Gandhi opened the Ram Temple in Ayodhya, which had been closed for years, to pilgrimage and worship. In fact, he started his electoral campaign in 1989 in Faizabad, the constituency in which the town of Ayodhya is located with promises of creating a Ram Rajya (the mythical kingdom of Ram, embodying good and enlightened rule) using language in several ways resembling that adopted by the BJP. A couple of weeks before the election, the VHP received permission from the Uttar Pradesh state

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[287] Jaffrelot, Christophe. *The Hindu Nationalist Movement in India*. (Columbia University Press, 1998), 315.

[288] Milan Vaishnav. "The BJP in Power: Indian Democracy and Religious Nationalism." Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, March 15, 2020.

authorities, with the approval of the central Congress leadership, to conduct a foundation laying ceremony for the proposed Ram temple at the Ayodhya site.

Such efforts by Congress party leaders to coopt Hindu nationalism paved the way for the dramatic rise of the BJP. By appealing to the religious sentiments of the majority population, the Congress party normalized the discourse of Hindutva. Congress, had in short, created an ideological environment that served the interests of BJP. As Professor Ashutosh Varshney, the Director of the Center of Contemporary South Asia at Brown University pointed out in an interview: "Once you tap into religious identity and appeal to one's religious beliefs to mobilize voters you lend legitimacy to the arguments made by religious nationalists themselves."[289] Just like the Turkish Islamic Synthesis' ideology promoted by the military hierarchy during the 1980's had the effect of strengthening Islamist groups and facilitating the ascendancy of an alternative Islamist-majoritarian conception of nation and state, during the 1970's and 1980's, the appropriation of Hindu nationalist themes by Congress leaders opened up political space for the rise and advance of Hindu nationalism. Furthermore, the continued depletion of the capacity, skills, and legitimacy of the Congress party, especially at the local level, created favorable conditions for the subsequent emergence of Hindu nationalists to the center stage of Indian politics in the late 1980's.

Hindu communalists had rallied behind the leadership of Indira and Rajiv Gandhi in the 1980's but this changed dramatically in the early 1990's, when these same constituencies switched their support en masse to the BJP. Hence the BJP gains in the 1990's should not have been altogether surprising. It was not that religion suddenly

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[289] Interview with Professor Ashutosh Varshney, the Director of the Center of Contemporary South Asia and Professor at Brown University, April 14, 2020.

became more important. Rather, the BJP's influence showed how much the ideological context had changed and how widely accepted Hindu nationalism had become. Of course, this would not have been possible without the organizational networks of the RSS and the wider Sangh Parivar, which the BJP allied with successfully to reach a much broader voter base. A similar process had also unfolded in the Turkish Islamist movement, when political Islamists tapped into the organizational networks provided to them by the Nurcu and Naksibendi networks, and later the inherited the grassroots organizational infrastructure of the Milli Gorus movement. In the words of an Indian scholar, the Hindu nationalist movement became successful politically only after they had "spread their tentacles" throughout society in India with the help of the Sangh Parivar.[290]

The RSS, the Sangh Parivar and the rise of the BJP

The BJP's ascent culminated in the electoral victories in 1996 and 1998 and led to the formation of a ruling coalition in 1999, the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) with the BJP at the helm.[291] The BJP's rise was facilitated by the opportunities that had opened up for a Hindu nationalist discourse in the public sphere, but could not have been possible without the extensive networks and organizational infrastructure provided by the Sangh Parivar now capitalized on by the BJP. The rapid economic transformation during the 1980's and the 1990's also made the ideology of an assertive Hindu nationalism much more attractive to a wider audience. The dislocation of some groups and the increased affluence of others contributed to economic rivalries that were often articulated in religious and communal terms. The growing affluence of many Muslims, due in part to

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[290] Kingshuk Nag, *The Saffron Tide: The Rise of the B.J.P.* New Delhi: Rupa/Rainlight Publications, 2014.
[291] Thomas Blom Hansen, *The Saffron Wave: Democracy and Hindu Nationalism in Modern India.* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999),156.

family members working in Gulf countries, contributed to a greater prominence and political assertiveness of their community.[292]

Similarly, the Hindu middle class was rapidly expanding, though its members were less westernized and less committed to secularism, than were their counterparts in Nehru's generation. This new demographic also looked with suspicion on any group that enjoyed a "special status" especially Muslims. The label of "pseudo secularism" for any policy measure that did not benefit Hindus was BJP's way of capitalizing on this suspicion, and it was enormously popular and adopted to the many vernacular languages across India. Most importantly, though, the RSS and the VHP worked assiduously in this context to make inroads into the new Hindu middle class.

In stark contrast to the founding fathers political and territorial notion of India, Hindu nationalist ideology, first codified in the 1920's by V. D. Savarkar in *"Hindutva: Who Is a Hindu?"* defines India culturally as a Hindu country and intends to transform it into a Hindu Rashtra (nation-state). [10] Hindu nationalists view India as a Hindu nation-state not only because Hindus make up about 80 percent of the population but also because they see themselves as the true sons of the soil, whereas they view Muslims and the small number of Christians as products of foreign invasions or denationalizing influences.

As mentioned earlier, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) emerged as the core of India's Hindu nationalist movement from 1950's onward, displacing and marginalizing other groups such as the Hindu Mahashaba. The Hindu nationalist organization known as the RSS was born in 1925 in reaction to a pan-Islamist mobilization of Indian Muslims known as the Khilafat Movement. While the Hindu

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[292] Ibid, *The Saffron Wave: Democracy and Hindu Nationalism in Modern India*, 143.

Mahasabha, the right wing of the Congress Party until Savarkar transformed it into a separate party in 1937, engaged in electoral politics even prior to independence, the RSS chose to focus on developing a dense network of local branches and creating front organizations, including a student union, a labor union and a an association dealing with religious matters only. Its primary focus was the transformation of Indian society through a return to Hindu culture. The defining features of the early RSS were its military organization, anti-Muslim sentiments and the asceticism of its followers. In an interview with the author, Tariq Thachil, Director of the Advanced Study of India and Associate Professor at UPenn described the movement as one that is playing a "long-game." He added that the RSS was interested mostly in: "changing the minds of younger generations and instilling an ethic of service to the Hindu nation. The long term goal is to build a Hindu state gradually from the bottom up by providing a sense of solidarity to people from different parts of the economic strata to band together."[293]

The RSS was a strictly hierarchical and all male militia style organization with local shakhas (branches) in various parts of the country forming its grassroots units.[294] The shakhas were the central tool, where boys and young men would meet one hour every day for physical exercise, drill, inculcation of ideals and norms of good and virtuous behavior (samskars) and ideological training (baudhik). The guiding idea was to cultivate a strong Hindu national identity as the supreme loyalty and to build up a strong fraternal bond between volunteers, the *swayemsevaks*. It's founder Hedgewar, wished to create new men, patriotic, selfless individuals loyal to the Hindu nation and the RSS,

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[293] Interview with Tariq Thachil, Director of the Center for the Advanced Study of India and Associate Professor at UPenn, April 9, 2020.
[294] Sumit Ganguly and Rahul Mukherji. *India Since 1980*. 1 edition. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011.

courageous and capable of organization.[295] Its members, about 600,000 by 1947, were major participants in the massive violence that accompanied India's partition, when hundreds of thousands of Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs were slaughtered and tens of millions became refugees. The RSS also carried out relief and rehabilitation work in northern India among Hindu refugees from Western Punjab and other parts of Pakistan. It was banned after Mahatma Gandhi's assassination in Delhi in early 1948, his killer, a former RSS member, was a Maharashtrian Brahmin from western India like the bulk of the early RSS's leaders and cadre.[296]

After independence and partition, the RSS grew beyond its Maharastrian Brahmin roots, recruiting mainly from among Punjabi Hindu refugees who resettled in and around Delhi, although its national headquarters remained in the city of Nagpur in west central India. In independent India, the RSS grew to become the core of the Sangh Parivar, a family of organizations comprising the Hindu nationalist movement. It's first affiliate, formed in 1948, was the Akhil-Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad or ABVP (All India Students' Council), reflecting the RSS's emphasis on recruiting and indoctrinating youth.[297] In an interview with the author, BJP politician and former Member of the State Legislature from Delhi, Vijay Jolly explained how he began his political career in the ABVP and as a student organizer.

After attending a number of speeches by BJP leaders, particularly impressed by the oratorical skills of Vajpayee at the University of New Delhi, Jolly was approached and recruited by a pracharak, who "gave him his first lesson in nationalism." Dr. Jolly's comments clearly underscore the importance of young people for the organization and the

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[295] Christophe Jaffrelot, *The Hindu Nationalist Movement in India*. Columbia University Press, 1998), 93.
[296] Ibid, *The Hindu Nationalist Movement in India*, 93.
[297] The Indian Express. "'A Battle between Hindutva and Hinduism Is Coming,'" August 11, 2018.

larger movement of Hindu nationalism: "I always say catch them young and indoctrinate them. Take fresh brains that could work with you for the next fifty years. This is how I began my journey with the BJP. I have been serving this nation for the last 40 years since I was a student organizer. " Dr. Vijay Jolly also pushed back against the notion that the RSS were Hindu fundamentalists, once again highlighting the efforts of by the RSS to win the hearts and minds of India's youth without resorting to violence: "They always said if anyone doesn't believe in you and your ideology, you engage with them, cajole them, convince them and eat with them."[298]

As the Sangh Parivar family developed, more affiliates were born. These included the Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh (Indian Workers Organization), the labor wing, in 1955, and the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (Religious Council) or VHP, responsible for religious matters in 1964. The VHP led a relatively low profile existence until the late 1970's. It's objectives were formulated at the outset: to consolidate "Hindu society," to spread Hindu religious values in public life, to establish a network comprising all Hindus living outside of India. The VHP entered the field of social welfare work more systematically in the early 1970's, starting schools, medical centers, daycares and hostels all over the country.[299] A lot of this work is carried out locally, as in the Christian tradition, by converting temples into centers of social work and relief.

The VHP also formed committees that initiated renovation and expansion of these temples. Existing networks of devotees were activated and reorganized in order to carry out social work, particularly in slums and rural areas. The local units were also active in

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[298] Interview with Dr. Vijay Jolly, Member of the National Executive Committee of the BJP and former Member of the State Legislature from Delhi April 14, 2020.
[299] Kumar, Sunil. *Communalism and Secularism in Indian Politics: Study of the BJP*. (Jaipur: Rawat Publications, 2001), 45.

organizing religious mandals (committees), and in bringing various Hindu sects together on common platforms. At the level of city, region and state, the VHP also worked to bring influential industrialists, politicians, and leaders of religious sects together on platforms of Hindu unity.[300] Although the activities of the VHP and the RSS were portrayed as cultural, they had clear political motivations. This was evident in the VHP's effort to stigmatize various "threats," such as Christian proselytizing and Muslim separatism, in order build Hindu unity. One such effort was the cow protection mobilization of 1966-67. Although ostensibly aimed at eliminating the slaughter of cows, a symbol of Hindu identity, this issue was also used to denigrate Muslims, who were commonly involved in the beef and leather trade, and to mobilize Hindu sentiments behind the Jana Sangh.

Most importantly, the VHP took center stage with the organization of the Ekamata Yatra ("one mother") campaigns in 1982-1983 in South India and the following Ayodhya agitations. It began its agitation by filing a writ petition in the local court requesting a reopening of the disputed structure for Hindu worship. In 1984, the Shri Ramjanmabhoomi Mutki Yagna Samiti (the committee for the liberation of Ram's birthplace) was formed and in 1985 a series of processions and marches to Ayodha was launched from twenty-five places in north India. The VHP was reorganized and expanded in the course of these campaigns. A permanent local infrastructure, parallel though distinct from that of the RSS, was established in large parts of the country. For the first time, the VHP and the Sangh Parivar as such, acquired a network in the entire south Indian region, which marked a significant step toward an actual nationalization of the

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[300] Christophe Jaffrelot, *The Hindu Nationalist Movement in India*. Columbia University Press, 1998.

movement. In Feb 1986, the campaign yielded its first result when the Faizabad District

Court decided to open the Babri Masjid for worship.[301]

Table 3.2 Main Organizations of the Sangh Parivar

Name of Organization	Function within the Sangh
Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS)	Parent organization, grassroots mobilization
Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)	Political party arm
Vishva Hindu Parishad	Religious and cultural affairs, international activities
Bharatiya Kisan Sangh	Farmer Union
Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh	Workers Union
Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP)	Student Union
Bajrang Dal	Male/female youth wing

The ideological frame of the RSS and the entire Sangh Parivar which grew around

it in post independence India was developed by the second RSS Sarsangchcalak (supreme

chief), Madhav Sadashiv Golwakar, who assumed Hedgewar's mantle upon the latter's

death in 1940 and led the organization until his own death in 1973. He was initially

skeptical of partisan politics and opposed to forming a political party, but eventually

relented and the Jana Sangh, the BJP's predecessor was formed. He wrote in the RSS's

English journal, Organiser, in 1956:

"I had to warn him (the President of the BJS, Syama Prasad Mookerjee) that the
RSS could not be drawn into politics, that it could not play second fiddle to any political

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[301] Panikkar, K. N. *Communalism in India: History, Politics, and Culture.* (Manohar Publ., 1991), 38.

party because no organization devoted to the wholesale regeneration of the Nation could function successfully if used as a handmaid of political parties."[302]

In this compromise, however, the RSS developed a policy of transferring its brightest and most committed cadres to the Jana Sangh. In the 1950's and 1960's these included Deendayal Upadhaya, who worked as the Jana Sangh's General Secretary from 1953 to 1967 and was its President when he died in 1968.[303] Another was Atal Behari Vajpayee, India's first Hindu Nationalist Prime Minister (briefly in 1996 and then from 1998-2004), to be followed by L.K. Advani, the main figure of the Ayodha agitations of the early 1990's.

The practice became routinized over time and continued after the formation of the BJP as the Jana Sangh's successor in 1980. Men transferred from the RSS occupy key positions both in the BJP's national organizational set-up and in the party's State units. Narendra Modi, the current PM of India, also joined the BJP after leaving his fulltime role in the RSS in the late 1980's. This alliance that Golwakar consented to in the early 1950's has enabled the RSS hierarchy to exercise close control and supervision of the party that represents it in the political arena, while the party benefits from the "army of foot soldiers who are delegated from every *shakha* (cell) in a state to interact with sensitive constituencies."[304]

Following the imposition of the Emergency in 1975, the RSS, which was identified as one of the main forces in the anti-Congress front was banned. The preceding activist strategy of the Sangh Parivar in general and the Jana Sangh in particular had,

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[302] Christophe Jaffrelot, ed. *Hindu Nationalism: A Reader*. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007), 175-177.
[303] Sumantra Bose, *Secular States, Religious Politics: India, Turkey, and the Future of Secularism*. 1 edition. (Cambridge, United Kingdom ; New York, NY, USA: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 170.
[304] Shashi Tharoor, "India's Cult of Modi | by Shashi Tharoor." Project Syndicate, May 28, 2019.

however, allowed the RSS complex to establish itself firmly in most parts of India.[305] The Jana Sangh's support base was still largely found in northern India, but the larger network of the Sangh Parivar made the ban far more difficult to enforce in 1975 than in 1948. Similar to the ban on the Islamist parties in Turkey, and the Welfare Party in particular, the ban also had the unintended effect of positioning both the Jana Sangh and the RSS in an unprecedented position from which they could claim to be champions of democracy and freedom.

In an interview with the author, Rajendra Abhyankar, a former diplomat who served as India's Ambassador to the EU and is currently an academic at Indiana University, summed up the role of the RSS: "The reason why the BJP could not achieve electoral success before 1998, was because there were organizational and other hurdles. The RSS, which is the root that girds the BJP was banned as a political organization through much of the decades until the 1980's. Those who were in government could not join these organizations." This speaks to the central role the RSS played in the Hindu nationalist movement, and its subsequent rise to power.[306]

The BJP Enters the Governing Coalition: 1996 Lok Sabha Elections

From its formation in 1980 to a crushing defeat to Congress in the 1984 elections, the BJP abandoned some of the Hindutva based identity of the Jana Sangh and stayed away from its past ties to RSS and other right-wing organizations.[307] Instead, under the

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[305] Lardinois, Roland. "Graham (Bruce D.) : Hindu Nationalism and Indian Politics. The Origins and Development of the Bharatiya Jana Sangh." *Outre-Mers. Revue d'histoire* 78, no. 292 (1991): 453–453.

[306] Interview with Rajendra Abhyankar, Former diplomat and India's Ambassador to the EU April 9, 2020.

[307] Manini Chatterjee. "The BJP: Political Mobilization for Hindutva." In Religion, Religiosity, and Communalism. eds. Praful Bidwai, Harbans Mukhia, and Achin Vainik. (New Delhi: Manohar Publications, 1996), 88-89.

leadership of Vajpayee, the BJP had sought to attract Muslims and lower caste Hindus by protecting "religious rights for all," emphasizing social issues and playing down its Hindu character.[308] During this time, Vajpayee introduced the concept of "positive secularism," an implicit critique of the way Congress "pampered" minorities to get votes. However, the term also explicitly endorsed the secular nature of the state, which the core electorate of the Jana Sangh and the RSS had never accepted. It even attempted to prove its secular credentials by attracting Muslim personalities and candidates for state and general elections and by encouraging candidates to participate in Muslim festivals. This created widespread dissatisfaction among RSS cadres at the ground level and a considerable debate arose within the Sangh Parivar on this issue. The RSS did not mobilize its cadres in support of BJP during the 1984 elections.

In 1984, leading RSS figures openly called for the RSS cadres to support Congress in various local elections, rather than the BJP. After the BJP won only 2 seats in the Lok Sabha in 1984 however, the party shifted back to ally with the RSS and thus play up Hindutva under the new leadership of L.K. Advani. Concessions were given to a more "purist line" emphasizing the BJP's profile as the defender of "Hindu society," in order to win back the support of the local RSS cadres. This allowed the BJP leaders to gain the support of the large Hindu base already supporting the RSS. The relationship between the RSS and the BJP, is quite different in this sense from that of the Milli Gorus and AKP. While both movements laid the ideological groundwork of the political parties that represent them in the political sphere, the AKP successfully distanced itself from Milli Gorus, while the RSS still exercises considerable influence over the BJP. As Erdogan

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[308] Hibbard, Scott W. *Religious Politics and Secular States: Egypt, India, and the United States*. (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), 142.

himself put it, the AKP came to power by "taking off the Milli Gorus shirt" and relying

instead on the Gulenist networks to challenge the hegemony of the Kemalists in the

bureaucracy. On the other hand, the RSS and the BJP's alliances with the Sangh Parivar

remain central to the success of the BJP and the organization exercises significant control

over the political party and the direction of policy through the ties of influential leaders

within the BJP to the organization.

In 1992, the BJP saw and capitalized on the national Hindu uproar over the

Ramjanmabhoomi issue, which was the movement concerning the disputed Babri Masjid

in Ayodhya. Specifically, this movement focused on demolishing a mosque and building

an Indian temple, or a Mandir, in Ayodhya on the site where Hindus claim a Mandir had

once stood that was the birthplace of an important Hindu god, Ram.[309] At first the BJP

tried to abstain from the Ram agitation, fearing it would not be in a position to make

allies if it returned to extremist politics, but later fell in line seeing the electoral

opportunity the movement was likely to create. The BJP then formally signed a

declaration in support of this cause, and even sent L. K. Advani, the BJP's national

President, on a *Rath Yatra*, a political and religious tour of the country in a Rath from

Gujarat ending in Ayodhya, to gain support for building the temple. His convoy evoked a

massive response from emotionally charged crowds along the way. Cries of Jai Shri Ram

(Victory to Lord Ram), mandir wahin banayenge (we will build the temple there, no

matter what), garv se kaho, hum Hindu hain (say it with pride we are Hindu) and aur ek

dhakka do, Babri Masjid tor do (give it another push and the Babri Mosque will fall)

were chanted by followers, as Advani brandished the sword presented to him at frequent

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[309] Thomas Blom Hansen, *The Saffron Wave: Democracy and Hindu Nationalism in Modern India*.
(Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), 104.

stops on the journey.[310] It was this kind of religious mobilization and direct appeals to religious identity by Hindu activists that marked the rise of the BJP in the early 1990's.

The *Ramjanmabhoomi* campaign was instrumental in turning the Hindutva movement from a minor to a major force in Indian politics. In the midterm national election of May-June 1991, the BJP won 20.1 percent of the nationwide votes and won in 120 constituencies. But nearly half of those wins, 51, were in one State, Uttar Pradesh, where the campaign had made a strong impact. This was also a sign of the geographic limits of Hindu nationalism at this point, with the majority of MP's elected from the north (Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Delhi) and the west (Gujarat, Maharashtra.) It is also interesting to note that the rise in votes seems to have been disproportionately fueled by surging upper caste support. The election results from 1991 "suggested that the large constituency won by the BJP was fairly young, predominantly male, urban and upper caste."

The construction of the Ram temple at the site of the razed mosque in Ayodhya was part of the core Hindu nationalist agenda the BJP articulated on behalf of the Sangh Parivar in the1990's. The other two items on the Hindutva agenda were a uniform civil code for all communities in India to eliminate the "pseudo secular state's" acceptance of the legal validity of Sharia law in personal and familial matters among Muslims, and the removal of Article 370 from the Constitution, which enshrines Jammu and Kashmir's special autonomous status within the Indian Union, on the grounds that it amounts to appeasement of Muslims.[311]

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[310] Christophe Jaffrelot, *The Hindu Nationalist Movement in India*. (Columbia University Press, 1998), 32.
[311] Bose, Sumantra. *Secular States, Religious Politics: India, Turkey, and the Future of Secularism*. 1 edition. (Cambridge, United Kingdom ; New York, NY, USA: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 97.

The results of the 1991 and the subsequent 1996 elections also proved the effectiveness of the new coalition of the RSS, Shiv Sena, VHP, and BJP, comprising the Sangh Parivar, in gaining the support of many sections of Indian society that the BJP would have had trouble receiving on its own.[312] With the help of these networks, the BJP's overall ideas gained support from a growing portion of society, both because of its own efforts and because of its attitude promoting working with other similar-minded, although often more radical, political groups and religious associations.

The BJP leadership, for example, undertook an alliance with the Shiv Sena a thuggish nativist Maharastrian party in 1996, because they saw Shiv Sena's "immense dynamism" in its support from various portions of society.[313] In previous state elections in Gujarat and Maharashtra the BJP had secured control of the state assembly with the Shiv Sena as coalition partner. This was a common theme concerning the BJP's decisions to ally with other political groups. Indeed, just as the Congress Party's success was derived from its ability to combine many elements of society to make one "miniature Indian society," the BJP now too used this tactic to make its own "umbrella" organization.[314] Maintaining these key alliances with the Sangh Parivar allowed for the BJP's continual growth in electoral victories, winning a majority of seats in 1996, until 2004 when it unexpectedly, but still rather narrowly, lost power to Congress. The next chapter will explore the key election victories of the AKP and the BJP in 2002 and 2014, critical junctures in the rise of religious nationalism for both India and Turkey.

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[312], Thomas Blom Hansen, *The Saffron Wave: Democracy and Hindu Nationalism in Modern India*. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999),
[313] Ghanshyam Shah, "BJP's Rise to Power." *Economic and Political Weekly* 31, no. 2/3 (1996): 165–70.
[314] Sunil Kumar, *Communalism and Secularism in Indian Politics: Study of the BJP*. (Jaipur: Rawat Publications, 2001), 48-49.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I argue that religious political movements in both Turkey and India capitalized on the religious politics of the secular actors during the 1980's, in particular the leaders' instrumental use of religion and a majoritarian discourse, which paved the way for the rise of religious forces later in the 1990's. Both the Turkish military and the Congress party sought to coopt the rhetoric and symbols of religious nationalism for their own political projects but this strategy ultimately failed and had the unintentional consequence of strengthening the religious movements that they were trying to challenge in the first place.

In both countries, decades of disciplined, well-planned organizational and ideological expansion of religious networks laid the groundwork for rise of religious parties by helping party activists build robust political organizations that tapped into the dense networks of religious associations. Subsequently, religious parties were able to take advantage of new opportunities that had opened up in the political sphere for religious mobilization after years of political exclusion. In the process, both parties also strategically toned down the religious rhetoric and honed in on socioeconomic grievances in order to broaden their appeal beyond their core constituency. In the Turkish experience, the AKP distanced itself from the Milli Gorus movement in significant ways once it came to power whilst in India the BJP retains a much closer relationship with the RSS, for both ideological and organizational reasons.

Chapter 4
Religious Nationalists Come to Power in 2002 and 2014: The Power of Organization

This chapter will analyze the landslide victories of the AKP and the BJP, in the 2002 and 2014 elections respectively. Both are crucial elections in which religious nationalists assume the helm of the state, firmly establish their hegemonic rule and upend the previous order in important ways. These moments can be considered critical junctures in the political development of both countries, as they highlight important turning points with an electoral realignment taking place between establishment political parties and religiously inspired ones. What explains the astounding ascent of religious nationalism to the halls of power in Ankara and Delhi at this particular point in time? More specifically, how can we explain the remarkable electoral victories of the AKP in 2002 and the BJP in 2014 given that they were nascent political parties only a decade ago? Finally, how do we account for the political resilience and the continuing electoral achievements of these parties given the numerous crises and challenges that their respective governments faced in power?

In this chapter, I argue that both the AKP and the BJP owe their electoral success to the development of a personalistic membership party. Based on the framework described in chapter one in detail, a personalistic membership party is distinguished from other types of political parties, in particular elite-based or cadre parties by the party's robust local presence, a grassroots organization that is active year-round and tightly controlled by the central leadership, its connection with the urban lower classes and the importance attached by the party elite to the professionalism and intra-party education of its members. Moreover, members are motivated by collective incentives, such as the extra-material ideological and emotional bonds between party members and supporters as

well as a strong emotional attachment to the leader. Most importantly, the backbone of these political organizations can be attributed to the religious movements they are associated with, conferring upon them a certain "organizational thickness."

The literature on party organizations specifically in Turkey prior to the emergence of the AKP demonstrate that they were for the most part elite-based entities ("cadre" and "catch-all" are terms used in this literature) whose membership usually increased dramatically during elections and which depended on patronage, brokerage and clientelism, in other words the relationship between party leaders and powerful traditional local elites. The same holds true for the nature of Indian political parties. Despite the dominant role of the leadership within these elite-based parties, traditional and local power holders were always central in these "personalistic cadre parties."[315]

Political parties in Turkey entered into a period of further organizational decline after the introduction of neo-liberal reforms in the 1980's except in the case of the Welfare Party, the main predecessor of the AKP. It became increasingly difficult for elite-based, center-right parties to remain in power through previously effective means such as negotiating with traditional local elites (who possessed fewer and fewer resources), offering state subsidies for agricultural products, and providing employment opportunities in the state's massive public sector due to rapid privatization and economic liberalization. It was in this context that the AKP and the BJP built powerful mass-based membership organizations with young, ambitious and more-educated party activists campaigning actively at the grassroots level with the support of the myriad religious

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[315] Sayari, Sabri and Yilmaz Esmer. *Politics, Parties, and Elections in Turkey*. (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Pub, 2002), 23.

associations that could penetrate even the most remote corners of the country, including urban and rural areas.

The Election of 2002: The AKP's Shocks the Secular Establishment

In the Turkish case, the AKP was founded by a younger generation of Islamist politicians who were driven by the promise of being a pragmatic political force that unlike their elders, would not "rock the boat." This promise entailed gaining enough electoral support to form single party governments, surviving in government without being subject to another coup attempt, establishing a counter balance against the secular establishment and expanding the sphere of Islamic identity in the long run. The founders of the AKP were willing to operate within the parameters of the establishment and promoted themselves as a conservative party, initially not in opposition to secularism. [316]

While the AKP has Islamic roots, since many of its leaders, including Erdoğan and Gül, came out of the National View movement and had been members of the Welfare and Virtue parties, the AKP positioned itself not as a religious (Islamist) party but as a "conservative democratic" party similar to Christian democratic parties in Western Europe.[317] In the words of Erdoğan himself, the party "took off the Milli Görüş shirt." It is interesting to note that even after the party embraced a much more religiously nationalist discourse and authoritarian tone, a number of party officials and parliamentarians shunned the label Islamist and pointed out that they still saw themselves as "conservative democrats" during the interviews the author conducted, a label that has

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[316] Sebnem Gumuscu and Deniz Sert. "The Power of the Devout Bourgeoisie: The Case of the Justice and Development Party in Turkey." Middle Eastern Studies 45, no. 6 (November 1, 2009): 953–68.
[317] Yalçın Akdogan, *Muhafazakar Demokrasi* [Conservative Democracy] (Ankara: AK Parti Yayınları, 2003).

not been associated with the AKP since at least 2011, when the party brutally cracked down on the opposition following the Gezi protests.

One AKP parliamentarian from Istanbul, Belma Satir, who joined the party as it was being founded in 2002 said to the author in an interview:

"I had no previous political affiliation prior to joining the party. I was a lawyer by training, who saw the many injustices in the trial against Erdoğan during the late 1990's and my female friends who wore headscarves. This was by no means an Islamist movement. We see ourselves as "conservative democrats" representing the traditional, family values of Anatolia. There were AKP members from very different segments of the population during our first meeting that took place in Afyon. It was like an umbrella, a big tent that reflected the rich fabric of Turkish society. These groups disagreed and debated for hours the party program, the charter and other details such as the party's name and logo."[318]

This statement captures the motivation of many of the party's leaders in the early years of the AKP as the ideological framework of the party continued to evolve. It certainly did bring together members from different segments of society, with a wide range of professional backgrounds and political experiences. It was interesting that in her interview Belma Satir pointed out that there were Alevis, and non-Muslims at the party's founding conference and that the AKP welcomed this diversity. It was also noteworthy that she mentioned that: "there were no atheists, naturally, but members from different religious affiliations."

In its party program, the AKP even emphasized its loyalty to the republican values and the "indivisible unity of the Turkish Republic."[319] As Deniz Zeyrek, chief Ankara correspondent of the Turkish Daily *Hurriyet*, pointed out in an interview with the author the Islamist politicians of the late 1990s, most of whom had joined the AKP, realized that they needed the West and the language of western values of democracy,

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[318] Author's interview with Belma Satir, Istanbul MP from the AKP, Ankara, July 20, 2019.
[319] Ibid, *Muhafazakar Demokrasi* [Conservative Democracy] (Ankara: AK Parti Yayınları, 2003).

human rights and the rule of law in order to build a broader front against the Kemalists, and to acquire legitimacy through this new discourse in their confrontation with the secularist establishment.

Through the process of political participation, the party's leaders had realized the advantages of speaking the language of democracy, which enabled them to communicate with the West and at the same time to reassure those who suspect that it may secretly harbor an Islamist agenda. This strategy was very effective in the early years of the AKP. In the face of pressures originating from the military's adamant opposition to Islamists, the AKP elite embraced the legitimizing power of democracy, which turned out to be a means to highlight "people power" vis-a-vis state power.[320] In this way, the AKP moved closer to the Turkish center right tradition, the hallmark of which has been using "service to the nation" as a slogan to undercut the unpopular Kemalist cultural Westernization project, disguise their own ideological ambiguity and emphasize their responsiveness to the people.

Developing a pro-western stance and adopting a democratic discourse may have damaged the Islamists' traditional appeal but initially it helped construct an Islamic identity based on a new political language that coexists with the West and westernization. The emergence of the AKP embracing modern political values and integration with the EU, was a landmark of the direction the Islamists had taken in Turkey. Meanwhile, the 2001 economic crisis in Turkey made clear that strict adherence to the program of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and attracting more foreign investment were necessary to overcome Turkey's financial difficulties and put the Turkish economy back

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[320] Menderes Çınar, "From Moderation to De-Moderation: Democratic Backsliding of the AKP in Turkey," in *The Politics of Islamism: Diverging Visions and Trajectories*, eds. J. L. Esposito, L. Z. Rahim and N. Ghobadzadeh, (New York: Palgrave, 2017), 153.

on its feet. Indeed, by pledging to continue with the previously accepted IMF program, the AKP reaffirmed its pro-globalization stance.[321]

Although the AKP emerged as an offshoot of the Islamist Welfare Party, a moderate, non-confrontational rhetoric and electoral agenda made the party attractive to a diverse array of the population. In a landslide victory, the AKP won the November 2002 elections with 34 percent of the vote, well ahead of the secularist CHP, which placed second with 19 percent of the vote.[322] (The Felicity Party received only 2.5 percent) As only these two parties obtained sufficient votes to cross the 10 percent threshold needed for representation in parliament, the AKP received nearly two-thirds of the seats in the National Assembly, enabling it to form a government on its own. A 2002 pre-election survey showed that the AKP seemed to have successfully rebuilt the Özal ANAP coalition bringing together former center right voters, moderate Islamists, moderate nationalists, and even a certain segment of the former center left.[323] In sociological terms, the AKP coalition was initially based on the support of much of the rural population, artisans and small traders in the cities, the urban poor and the rapidly rising Islamist business class.

The AKP's adoption of a more moderate and pragmatic political message undoubtedly expanded the party's political base and contributed to its electoral success in the 2002 elections. But several other factors helped as well, in particular the incompetence of the corruption-ridden governments of the 1990's. The AKP was able to

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[321] A. Kadir Yıldırım. *Muslim Democratic Parties in the Middle East: Economy and Politics of Islamist Moderation* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2016), 124.

[322] Ziya Onis and E. Fuat Keyman, "Turkey at the Polls: A New Path Emerges," *Journal of Democracy* 14, no.2 (2003): 95-108.

[323] Simten Cosar and Aylin Ozman, "Centre-right politics in Turkey after the November 2002 general election: Neo-liberalism with a Muslim face," *Contemporary Politics* 10, no. 1 (2004): 57-74.

exploit public discontent with revelations of corruption in the mainstream secular parties and to portray itself as the party of "clean government." In that sense, similar to Modi's appeal in India, the AKP's popularity in the 2002 elections can be attributed in large measure to the way in which the movement tapped into a sense of popular dissatisfaction with Turkey's established political elites and was able to mobilize these voters through the extensive social networks accessed by the party organization.[324]

The party attracted many voters who had been disillusioned with the incompetent leadership of the centrist parties. The political leadership in Turkey throughout the 1990's was unable to meet the needs and expectations of the nation whose hopes they had raised. Equality, dignity, social welfare or even opportunities to improve social standing through education and employment remained on the whole broken promises.[325] Major figures of the center right parties such as Tansu Çiller and Mesut Yilmaz, had been implicated in corruption scandals, further undermining public trust in political elites and institutions while giving rise to a unprecedented level of cynicism among the Turkish electorate. People continued to face rampant inequality, unveiled corruption, prevailing poverty and ignorance.

The Role of the Grassroots and Party Organization in AKP's Success

The AKP's electoral success was by no means an easy task, or a foregone conclusion. Grievances and structural factors alone cannot explain political mobilization. The way in which the AKP built an effective grassroots organization that was able to mobilize these

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[324] Sebnem Gumuscu and Deniz Sert. "The Power of the Devout Bourgeoisie: The Case of the Justice and Development Party in Turkey." *Middle Eastern Studies* 45, no. 6 (November 1, 2009): 953–68.
[325] Doğu Ergil, "Identity Crises and Political Instability in Turkey," *Journal of International Affairs* 54, no. 2 (2000): 53.

grievances and tap into the social networks that voters inhabit is key to understanding the success of the AKP as a political movement. In this chapter, I argue that the most important factor that defines the party's electoral success is its organizational strength derived from its massive membership organization that is active year round and maintains a robust local presence on the ground, what I have termed the "personalistic membership party." One of the most striking observations the author made during fieldwork conducted in Ankara and Istanbul over the summer of 2019, was the discipline and effectiveness of the AKP's party organization.

The AKP has an impressive base of membership with more than nine million members and a member to voters ratio of 40 percent (as opposed to the main opposition party CHP's ratio of 10 percent). It is important to note that under the "personalistic membership party" type, membership is not defined by active participation in intra-party debates, candidate selection or the decision-making processes of the party or even by paying dues, but membership is understood more loosely as active supporters of the party who are likely to campaign for the party during election time and act as a kind of mobilizational resource in times of crisis. Party officials stated that about 300,000 of members perform some active duty such as being deputies, mayors, city councilors, members of the executive committees at the central, provincial, sub-provincial and municipal level, and village, neighborhood and polling district representatives. As one of my interviewees, a sub-provincial chair of the AKP in Ankara, Kizilcahamam district, underlined, the AKP elite paid particular attention to registering as many members as possible: "As our prime minister said, we are the most alive party in the world with the largest membership. Every year our member numbers increase. We always have

membership forms nearby. If someone wants to become a member we immediately fill out these forms."[326]

What we see in these inflated membership figures is a kind of strategy, a "speed membership," through which the party leadership tries to encapsulate voters by registering as many of them as possible as members. For instance, AKP activists register members during election periods in mobile registration vehicles and during spontaneous contacts with the party's supporters and sympathizers. This is also a central element of strategy employed by the BJP, which boasts the largest membership of a political party in the world, somewhere around 180 million members.[327] Although interviews revealed that there are almost no requirements or responsibilities attached to becoming a member, this membership pool serves as a strategic resource and a mobilizing tool for the parties during election campaigns.

In order to understand the hierarchical ties and the territorial penetration of the AKP it might be helpful to take a closer look at one concrete example. In Istanbul, the AKP's provincial executive board consists of fourteen people while the administration board consists of fifty people at the time of writing. Thirty-nine sub-provincial branches are under the control of the provincial branch of the AKP in Istanbul. The Bakırköy sub-provincial branch of the party in Istanbul consists of an executive board, an administration board, a women's branch and a youth branch. These units include fourteen, seventeen, thirty and twenty-eight people respectively. Under the Bakırköy sub-provincial branch of the party, one can find eleven neighborhood representatives. These

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[326] Interview with Rusen Akkouynlu, Sub-provincial chair of the AKP in Ankara, Kizilcahamam district, July 25, 2019.
[327] Official BJP website, http://bjp.org/en/jointheparty

neighborhood representatives (mahalle temsilcileri) also form ballot box administration committees (sandık yönetim kurulları), each consisting of nine people.[328]

The AKP sub-provincial branches also divide neighborhoods into ballot box regions and allocate a committee to every single ballot box. There are approximately 170,000 ballot boxes in urban Turkey and the party formed almost an equal number of ballot box committees. Each ballot box seeks to include 300 voters. This kind of local presence and organization around each ballot box was unparalleled in Turkish politics prior to the AKP. A study of local political organizations conducted by a Banu Eligur, a Professor at Başkent University, concluded that the AKP has the largest number of active party members in each province as well as the highest organizational density in 80 per cent of the provinces.[329] The organizational infrastructure of the AKP clearly shows that the party has a much stronger presence on the ground compared to other political parties, in particular the main opposition party, the CHP, even though it was established relatively recently.

In the 1980's and 1990's Turkish political parties employed more capital-intensive and media-based electoral strategies as opposed to labor-intensive ones.[330] While labor-intensive strategies depend on party workers, volunteers, canvassing, mass meetings and individual contacts with voters, capital-intensive strategies rely upon a network of campaign professionals, consultants and television. In contrast, the Welfare Party of the Islamist National View tradition, the precursor to the AKP was busy from the beginning of the 1990's constructing a large membership organization that was active

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[328] Author's interview with Lutfiye Cam, Head of the Women's Branch, Ankara MP from AKP, Ankara, July 28, 2019.

[329] Banu Eligur, Islamic Mobilization in Turkey, (Cambridge

[330] For the distinction between labor-intensive and capital-intensive campaigning techniques, see Farrell (1996: 171).

year-round and relied heavily on a membership profile motivated by strong collective incentives, such as the extra-material ideological and emotional bonds between the party and its members and supporters. This is different from the selective incentives, which refer primarily to more clientalistic type of material benefits (jobs, contracts and favors by local officials) derived from membership to a political party.[331] It is known that the founding leader of the Welfare Party, Erbakan, said many times that "if you have faith you have opportunities (*iman var imkan var!*)" and "I do not have supporters; I have believers," which indicate the role of ideational-emotional links between the National View tradition and its followers. Many of the AKP party workers had been trained in this kind of organizational work, referred to as "teşkilatcılık" in Turkish and inherited this approach to politics and grassroots organizing during their time with the Welfare party prior to joining the AKP. One of the AKP activists I interviewed described the organizational ethos of the AKP succinctly:

"Every week, we had regular neighborhood meetings, neighborhood consultation meetings including our ballot box representatives. We put enormous effort into the organization of these meetings. People coming from other parties are not really used to this kind of party activity. They are usually used to 'high' politics. This is to say that: you go and see influential people, you talk to a single person and expect 'this many votes would come through this person'. They have always done this kind of politics. But this is not the case in the AKP. We try to establish one-to-one contact with every voter. You gain votes one by one, by registering individual members . . ."[332]

Moreover, the AKP party organization is very active year round in organizing meetings, activities and events, even during periods when there are no elections being held. Education seminars for party workers take place on a regular basis across the

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[331] During my interviews, I frequently came across two different expressions used to describe party members. One of these expressions was partili and the other one was partici. While the former term referred to those party members with a sincere and altruistic engagement with the party, the latter term was used by my interviewees for party members who were expecting benefits such as jobs, promotion, aid and posts, along with a wider network of potential friends and customers from the party.
[332] Interview with Ramazan Bayramoglu, AKP Party Worker for Kizilcahamam Branch, Ankara, 19 July, 2019.

country at both the provincial and sub-provincial level and address such subjects as party organization, party ideology, election processes, communication in local elections, the economy and foreign policy. "The AKP is far ahead of other political parties in the specialized training and educational programs offered to members of the local organization, mayoral candidates, deputies and party staff," writes Ergun Özbudun in his study of the AKP during its early years.[333] It quickly became clear to me as well during interviews that party officials I interacted with were indeed very professional and well educated. They had been trained to answer questions from researchers and were clearly very well versed on topics including their party's political platform and programs. This emphasis on intra-party education is among the salient characteristics of a "personalistic membership party" developed here to describe the AKP's party organization.

The AKP also avoided recruiting its political cadres extensively from traditional local power holders in provincial Turkey. Previous center-right parties depended mostly on the support of local elites and tribal leaders in order to protect their electoral bases. Instead, the AKP tended to replace these kinds of cadres with younger, highly educated, more ambitious, career-oriented yet deferential people bypassing local power holders. As Varol Özdan, a columnist for the T24 notes: "Erdoğan's most important skill was to create continuous expectations and keep these expectations alive among the party cadres. The AKP's constant renewal of party cadres, except the core team, created newfound energy and enthusiasm in the party."[334]

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[333] William Hale and Ergun Ozbudun. *Islamism, Democracy and Liberalism in Turkey: The Case of the AKP*. (Routledge, 2009), 131.

[334] Varol Ozdan quoted in William Hale and Ergun Ozbudun. *Islamism, Democracy and Liberalism in Turkey: The Case of the AKP*. (Routledge, 2009), 32.

In an interview with the author, a veteran politician of the center right and former Deputy Prime Minister from 2015-2017 under the AKP, Tuğrul Türkeş, emphasized how the AKP's party organization differed from his previous experience with parties of the center right, giving examples from party visits he conducted in "gecekondu" districts on behalf of the AKP during election campaigns. Türkeş noted:

"When I campaigned for the MHP, the party would show up with its own delegation of 20-30 people, and crowd out the living rooms of the voters. We would end up having tea with our own party officials and leave having had very little contact with potential voters. Once I joined the AKP, the party workers waited outside, and made sure that we had a chance to have intimate conversations with the people living in the households and that these visits were note merely optics."[335]

This anecdote is one of many that illustrate how the AKP benefits from a very effective grassroots organization, which builds on local community networks and motivated party activists. Enormous attention is given to mobilization at the local level, with party representatives diligently coming into contact with potential voters and gradually building support by establishing close, personalized relationships. Many of the party activists that spoke to the author, emphasized that they paid regular household visits to the electorate, not only around elections but year round to listen to their concerns and communicate their requests to the AKP headquarters. This kind of local presence also helped the party identify people in need in low-income neighborhoods, so that activists could either provide direct cash assistance or refer them to local social assistance organizations or Islamic charities. In her work on Mexico's PRI, Beatriz Magaloni argues that a dense organizational network is vital for monitoring commitment problems in this kind of relationship with the electorate in an urban context.[336] In this sense, AKP's

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[335] Author's interview with Tugrul Turkes, Ankara MP from the AKP, Ankara, July 25, 2019.
[336] Beatriz Magaloni, *Voting for Autocracy: Hegemonic Party Survival and Its Demise in Mexico*. 1 edition. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 132.

massive and hierarchical party organization could also be considered a huge control mechanism over its low-income electorate in need of the party's assistance. This organizational formation also helped the AKP gain more control over ballot boxes and polling stations during election times and easily mobilize the party's supporters to vote.

The AKP leadership was also very disciplined about holding regular weekly meetings (referred to as consultation, *istişare*, in Turkish) with both provincial chairs, members of the executive committees and party activists at the local branches in order to enhance intra-party communication channels and receive feedback from the grassroots. All of these regular consultation meetings were held under the control and the personal presence of Erdoğan. One of the party workers I interviewed pointed out that these meetings also increased motivation: "People at the local party organization say the headquarters are taking me seriously."[337] Although these meetings did not produce binding decisions, there is no doubt that these meetings provided a strong sense of participation for the provincial organizations and the party's base as well as absorbing potential dissent. Türkeş also drew attention to the importance AKP party workers assigned to what he referred to as "feedback loops." Since he was an MP representing nine of Ankara's electoral precincts, he told me the party workers would call him before every local level election asking him for recommendations on which candidates to run in each district. Türkeş notes:

"They showed up to every meeting with a notebook, and took notes diligently. It was very clear that they had all been trained by the central party organization and they demonstrated a strong sense of discipline and work ethic, which was not the norm in party politics until then. During my time with the MHP, we would ask party workers to consult with MP's here and there but there was never an established channel of

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[337] Author's interview with Hatice Soylu, Party worker at the AKP Headquarters, July 25, 2019.

communication between them. It was not a collaborative culture. Everyone was very protective of their turf."[338]

Another strategy the AKP used to maintain close contact with both the party rank and file and the wider electorate following the 2002 general elections was conducting regular surveys. In order to have a sense of public opinion before determining policies and introducing new programs the party holds regular surveys and runs a very effective communications center (called AKIM) where citizens' complaints are followed up until a solution is reached by the party's professional staff. The party reportedly receives tens of thousands of applications to AKIM via email, phone or in person every year. In an interview, the chair of the Women's branch, Lutfiye Selva Cam, emphasized the importance of both AKIM and these surveys in which the party could reach approximately 40,000 respondents when deciding on certain issues and designing public policy programs. She correctly pointed out that this is a larger number of respondents than what many professional polling firms use for political opinion surveys.

In interviews, party officials consistently reiterated the importance of both these internal surveys and external ones conducted by private research companies in the party's candidate selection process. It is noteworthy that the surveys also served as an instrument for helping the leadership decide on key party nominations while also maintaining close control over the party base by providing them with first hand knowledge on voters' preferences. For example, the party center conducted surveys in several regions and provinces to measure the real support for local bosses. Interestingly, even if the claims of support made by local bosses were substantiated by the surveys, the AKP leadership

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[338] Author's interview with Tugrul Turkes, Ankara MP from the AKP, Ankara, July 25, 2019.

tended to opt for more competent and loyal candidates if they had a significant chance of winning the election.[339]

The AKP's political organization is not only effective on a large scale but also interacts with voters in a way that is more personal and attentive. The robust local presence helps the AKP develop a strong connection with its constituency through routine activities requiring face-to-face interaction such as regular house and workplace visits, participation in funerals and weddings, and condolence (taziye) visits. While describing the AKP's party organization, former Minister of State responsible for Women and Family Affairs, Selma Kavaf said in an interview:

"Before the AKP came to power, the state and nation were not at peace. There was a state dictated structure over the nation. The nation always saw the state's cold face. The AKP emerged from the society and by embracing society and asking for their voices, it shows the state's warm face and makes their voices heard."[340]

This statement is indicative of one of the most successful aspects of AKP's platform during the early years. The party initially appealed to a broad cross-section of society, empowering the vast "periphery" of Turkish society, who had felt marginalized and alienated by the intrusive policies of the Turkish state, in particular with regard to the bans on the display of religiosity in the public sphere discussed in chapter two.[341] AKP party activists were particularly careful to be genuine and not appear patronizing when reaching out to voters. The party leadership took the image and the campaigning style of the candidates and party members very seriously. Former AKP vice-chair in Istanbul, Hulusi Şentürk recently published a book on the politics of the Islamist movement in

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[339] William Hale and Ergun Ozbudun. *Islamism, Democracy and Liberalism in Turkey: The Case of the AKP*. Routledge, 2009.

[340] Author's interview with Selma Kavaf, former Minister of State responsible for Women and Family Affairs, Istanbul MP from AKP, Ankara, July 31, 2019.

[341] Banu Eligur, *The Mobilization of Political Islam in Turkey* (London: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 246.

which he detailed his, and by extension, the party's advice to organizers. For example, he wrote that candidates should avoid expensive clothes lest the electorate feel a status gap.[342] The AKP guide for deputy candidates underlined the importance of being modest too: "you should not create the impression that you know best, you should be moderate (*mütevazi* in Turkish) and always willing to listen". According to the same guide, candidates were also advised not to use arrogant language: "The way to approach people is by showing that your life is similar to the life that they have."[343]

The AKP's Women's and Youth Branches

Another aspect of the AKP's organizational strength lies in the way in which the party capitalized on the role of women in Turkish households. The presence of women activists provided the party with unparalleled access to conservative and lower-income households. One AKP parliamentarian I interviewed noted with pride: "Women are the key to AKP's success story. They are the heart of the family, they drive the conversation around the dinner table, and they can change family men's minds."[344] This success was due in large measure to the fact that the AKP inherited much of the Welfare party's organizational network of women's branches, which were instrumental in gaining the trust of households, especially in more conservative neighborhoods. In her work on *Islamist Mobilization in Turkey*, Jenny White extensively documents the activism of many devout Muslim women party members in the district of Ümraniye.[345]

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[342] Hulusi Şentürk, *İslamcılık - Türkiye'de İslami Oluşumlar Ansiklopedisi*. 4th ed. Çıra Yayınları, 2019.
[343] AKP Party Guide, 2007.
[344] Interview with Belma Satir, Member of Parliament from Istanbul, AKP Party, Jul 4, 2019.
[345] Jenny B. White, *Islamist Mobilization in Turkey: A Study in Vernacular Politics* (University of Washington Press, 2002), 31.

In one of my first interviews at the headquarters, I was told that the AKP women's organization is a mirror image of the AKP party organization and serves as a training ground for future female AKP parliamentarians. Out of the 53 women in parliament as of 2019, 46 came from the AKP women's branch. The women's organization is also very active at the grassroots level with over 5 million registered members. Lutfiye Selva Cam, the head of the Women's branch and a close confidant of President Erdoğan, explained in an interview:

> "Every neighborhood or *mahalle* has a "community chair" (mahalle başkanı in Turkish) who is responsible for knowing who lives in which house, which family has a newborn child, if there is someone ill in their household and every other detail about them. This way, there is a mechanism in place for offering help and providing solutions even without them asking for it. " [346]

These are typically women activists since it is culturally much easier for them to establish relationships with other women living in these households and knock on their doors while their husbands are away at work. This kind of personal relationship building and investing in social networks has become the hallmark of AKP's party organization. Moreover, the women's organization is a source of pride for party officials, and Erdoğan himself assigns a great deal of importance to the advice coming from the women's organization as it provides a strong base of support for the party. Lütfiye Selva Cam shared with me an anecdote about how Prime Minister Erdoğan reprimanded some of the more conservative AKP members in his entourage during a visit to a local party branch when they voiced concerns about her presence in various male dominated settings: "he always made sure there is a seat at the table for women during important party meetings," she added.

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[346] Author's interview with Lutfiye Cam, Head of the Women's Branch, Ankara MP from AKP, Ankara, July 28, 2019.

The AKP also has a very effective youth organization that serves both as a mechanism to connect with young voters but also as a school where young AKP supporters can train in organizing and working for political campaigns. It is noteworthy that Erdoğan himself was recruited at a very young age by the Kasimpasa youth branch and rose through the ranks of the party organization. In an interview with the author, Ciğdem Karaaslan, AKP Vice President for Environment and Cultural Affairs shared some of her experiences that speak to the parties' organizational effectiveness coming out of the youth branch:

"We had lists of the teenagers who turned eighteen in our neighborhood. As youth organizers, one of our tasks was to knock on their door at 12 am with a birthday cake and a lit candle to celebrate with them. For another project we created a stand at a youth fair organized in Umraniye, Istanbul in April 2016 in which young people could go into a booth and record a message for the President."[347]

Erdoğan himself personally responded to a number of the messages recorded by teenagers via Twitter. These examples illustrate the determination and diligence of the AKP elite to appeal to young people as well as their investment in potential voters even before they were eligible to vote. This emphasis on grassroots organization stood in stark contrast to the mindset of the CHP, the main opposition party, in particular during those years. It was astonishing that during an interview, the CHP Vice President for Party Education Policies, Yildirim Kaya said: "Owing to its ideological legacy, the CHP is a party that could stand even without a party organization."[348] This statement is reflective of an underlying current in CHP politics, unwillingness on behalf of party elites to engage in grassroots politics and an excessive reliance on the ideological heritage of

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[347] Author's interview with Cigdem Karaaslan, AK Party Vice President for Environment and Culture, Ankara MP from AKP, Ankara, July 28, 2019.
[348] Author's interview with Yildirim Kaya, VP for Party Education Policies, Ankara MP from AKP, Ankara, July 28, 2019.

Kemalism. While this sentiment is beginning to change with the election of Istanbul's new mayor Ekrem Imamoğlu and the CHP victories in a number of mayoral elections in 2019, the party has historically not invested much social capital in grassroots organizing and reaching out to voters beyond the Westernized upper middle classes.

Another point Kaya made was that the "CHP's President didn't have enough time to invest in the party organization because of the constant cycle of elections." This is a reference to the fact that particular since 2015, in a span of four years, Turkey has underwent two national level elections, two local level elections and one referendum. Nonetheless, it also speaks to the fact that grassroots organization was not prioritized within the CHP. The CHP has also been criticized, along with its leader, Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu, for failing to come up with a convincing party program and a vision to win votes. Instead, the party has remained divided within itself between those wanting to pursue a liberal democratic pro-EU agenda and those who have tried to maintain a more nationalist and hardline secularist posture (the so called *ulusalcilar* in Turkish).[349] The latter group was especially effective under the party's previous leadership and had approached the AKP's EU orientation with suspicion and resisted some of the key reforms.[350] This reluctance, however, has begun to change as the old guard in the CHP is being pushed aside but it remains to be seen whether the new figures within the party can assert their leadership and mobilize voters in the national elections scheduled for 2023.

Finally, the role of in person interaction and grassroots organizing should not be seen only in the context of the work of the rank and file. As one of my interviewees pointed out, Erdoğan's meetings and mass rallies were also a form of personal interaction

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[349] Sinan Ciddi, *The Rise of Kemalism in Turkish Politics*, (Routledge: 2009), 35.
[350] Carloatta Gall, "Istanbul's New Mayor Quickly Emerges as a Rival to Erdogan" *The New York Times*, July 3, 2019. Accessed March 13, 2020.

with the AKP that was very influential in mobilizing voters. For example, before the 2007 general elections, it was reported that Erdoğan visited fifty-four provinces out of eighty-one, whereas his closest rival, Deniz Baykal, then the chair of the CHP, had been to only thirty-one.[351] The mass rallies in which Erdoğan appeared were also much more well attended than those organized by the opposition, another indication of the party's organizational capacity. Organizing rallies is also one of the ways of keeping party organizations active given the demanding work for "filling the meeting space." As Murat Somer, an academic at Koç University who has written extensively on the rise of the AKP underlined, one of the reasons why Erdoğan organized so many meetings was to revitalize the party branches: "When the Prime Minister is visiting a town, for example, Kayseri, the local branch of the party will get to work weeks in advance."[352] This kind of organizational planning for meetings also enhances the hierarchical cohesion and solidarity of the party. Central decisions about organizing mass rallies in any part of the country starts a chain reaction that reverberates all the way down from the headquarters to the neighborhood branches.

Another quality of a personalistic membership party is the tight control exerted by the central leadership over the party organization. One way in which the AKP party elite monitored the rank and file was through AKBIS, an intra-party online system for the surveillance of party activities carried out by provincial branches. In an interview, the Kizilcahamam Ankara party chair described how AKBIS worked:

"Headquarters can see the party worker's performance by pressing a single key. Our sub-provincial chairs are asked to record information on questions such as: 'Does this member do the work she's been assigned by the party? Does she visit villages, does

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[351] Hurriyet, 2011.
[352] Author's Interview with Murat Somer, Professor of Political Science at Koc University, Istanbul, July 25, 2019.

she visit the citizens, does she participate in party activities?' We even know how long they stayed in the meeting. Sometimes, they just show up, sign the sheet and leave. But we have records. Sooner or later you definitely face these records."[353]

Through such surveillance measures the AKP headquarters directly controlled and monitored local provincial party activity and the effectiveness of the party workers. The Central Executive committee would also appoint national MP's as party-coordinators who were not part of local politics to oversee the party leadership at the provincial level. It was this kind of tight and layered supervision by central political elites that supplied the leadership with accurate and timely information of the activities of local branches.

Finally, it is also important to note that the party's strong organization has a meaning beyond electoral purposes for the AKP elite. It is also seen as a power base and a mobilizational resource by the formerly Islamist party elite against potential threats by the powerful actors in the country, such as the military, the judiciary and the bureaucracy, as well as against social discontent. For example, following the coup attempt on July 15, 2016, the AKP party organization once again showed that it was key to the party's success by providing rapid, effective and resilient mass mobilization in a political environment that included hostile and powerful elite opponents. Despite the official narrative that people from all walks of life resisted the coup attempt, there was solid evidence that the overwhelming majority of protesters who attended the resistance against the coup and the subsequent "Democracy Watches" (Demokrasi Nöbetleri) were AKP supporters and members (43 per cent and 41 per cent respectively).[354] In other words, besides immediate electoral dividends, the degree and nature of political conflict

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[353] Author's Interview with Saban Akdemir, Party Worker for AKP Kizilcahamam Branch, Ankara, July 22, 2019.
[354] Konda Arastirmalari, Demokrasi Nobetleri Anketi, 2016.

and divisions in the country were other factors making a year-round, large and pervasive organization indispensable for the AKP elite.

A Personalistic Membership-Party: Erdoğan's Leadership and the AKP

As in many other countries, election campaigns and political mobilization in Turkey have also centered on the public image and persona of party leaders. This is particularly the case for the AKP, where Erdoğan's powerful, charismatic personality and "man of the people" image has attracted many voters and enhanced the party's organizational capacity.[355] Scholars of leadership draw a distinction between two types of leaders: transactional leaders (problem solvers) and transformational leaders (visionaries).[356] Erdoğan, as well as Modi, clearly fit in the latter category as their relationship with voters is based on strong emotional attachments. Transformational leaders see themselves as agents of social change and rely on charisma rather than patronage, which enables the leader to acquire a larger than life image in the political arena. This is true for both Erdoğan and Modi, who have successfully told a story, one that speaks to national pride and the dignity of millions who have felt disempowered and excluded by the secular establishment. One could also argue that the replacement of secular nationalism by "Muslim/Hindu nationalism" in Turkey and India, respectively, represents the transformational impact of their leadership.

Recep Tayyip Erdoğan is admired for having risen from a humble background, suffered imprisonment for his beliefs (for reciting a poem by Necip Fazil Kisakurek that

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[355] Soner Cagaptay, The New Sultan: Erdogan and the Crisis of Modern Turkey. London (New York: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 2017), 87.
[356] This distinction was introduced by MacGregor Burns in the 1970's. Transactional leadership is based on exchange of goods or valued things between leaders and followers, whereas transformational leadership is based on strong emotional, ideological and moral bonds.

was seen as inciting to religious violence), and then launched a successful challenge to the secular state establishment. There is no doubt that his leadership has substantially contributed to the party's electoral success, as he has developed a significant cult like following with millions of devoted supporters.[357] Within the party organization, Erdoğan has also been referred to as the glue holding together what would otherwise be "too many diverse groups within the party" and "a set of informal networks." Given the fact that the AKP was initially made up of a coalition of Islamist cadres, center right politicians, far-right politicians, and Kurdish activists and that party's grassroots was initially more ideologically radical joining the AKP from the ranks of the Welfare party, it was also Erdoğan's tight control of the party organization that reigned in certain Islamist elements that might have been unpopular with the wider electorate.

Early in his career, Erdoğan had made a name for himself as an unorthodox Islamist. He earned his anti-establishment reputation as a young participant in city politics in Istanbul in the late 1980s and 1990s, famously refusing an employer's demand that he shave off his mustache and quitting his job instead. But he also disregarded some traditional Islamist sensitivities, especially those concerning gender. When he ran for mayor of Istanbul's Beyoğlu district in 1989, he encouraged women, including those who did not wear headscarves, to become involved in his campaign and to join the Welfare Party. And he made sure that his campaign workers did not to get into discussions about religion with voters. "You must absolutely build relations with people outside your

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[357] Rusen Cakir and Fehmi Calmuk, Recep Tayip Erdogan, *Bir Donusum Oykusu* [Recep Tayip Erdogan, A Story of Transformation] (Istanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2001).

community," he advised them. "Salute even the customers in places where alcohol is served."[358]

Erdoğan was above all a very skillful and strategic political organizer who never lost sight of his ultimate goal: to achieve and maintain power. Many incidents described in Erdoğan's official biography underline his tactical intelligence and ideological flexibility. During the Istanbul local elections in 1989, for example, Erdoğan did not find the excessively religious appearance of one of the candidates of the Welfare Party appropriate and ordered him to shave and to wear a suit.[359] He was deliberate about sending women without headscarves to the more secular neighborhoods of Istanbul instead of headscarf-wearing members of the party. This kind of multi-faceted strategy that targeted different segments of the electorate showed how pragmatic Erdoğan was as a politician focused on winning elections, rather than towing the Islamist line.

Erdoğan became the mayor of Istanbul in 1994, and presided over a period of significant improvement in the services provided by the city. This experience also shaped his understanding of politics and led him to believe that "service" (hizmet) should be the center of his political appeal, as opposed to more religious themes. He was also known to be a diligent and creative "organization man" (teskilatçı) meaning he placed a great deal of emphasis on organization building in order to achieve and maintain power. As mentioned above, it was Erdoğan who introduced the use of women in electoral campaigns around 1990 despite the conservative reactions that came from within the ranks of the Islamist Welfare Party. Moreover, it was under his direction that public

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[358] Halil Karaveli, "Erdoğan's Journey," *Foreign Affairs*, Nov/Dec 2016; and Soner Cagaptay and Oya Rose Aktas, "How Erdoganism Is Killing Turkish Democracy," *Foreign Affairs*, July 7, 2017.
[359] Hüseyin Besli and Ömer Özbay. *R Tayyip Erdogan*. (Medyan Yayincilik, 2014), 56.

opinion surveys began to be used extensively while he was sub-provincial chair of the Beyoğlu branch.[360] This aspect of his leadership is central to my argument in this chapter; his role as party leader enhanced the organizational capabilities of the AKP.

After his release from prison in 1997, Erdoğan recast himself as a "conservative democrat" and aligned himself with a group of post-Islamist conservative reformers who had broken with Islamism's traditional anti-Western posture and advocated that Turkey orient itself more firmly in a pro-European direction.[361] Given the centrality of Erdoğan to the party organization and to the mobilization of voters and resources, as well as the accumulation of power in his hands, which is described in more detail in the next chapter, I refer to the AKP as a personalistic membership party. In this context, it is also important to note that Erdoğan himself played an instrumental role in attracting party activists and voters to the party as opposed to religiosity or even nationalism. During my fieldwork, I frequently heard from party workers that they attached great importance to Erdoğan as a visionary leader and saw him as the most "authentic" politician in Turkish politics. (*samimi* in Turkish) It seemed like he had touched everyone in the organization in some personal way and motivated each and every one of them to work relentlessly for the party's success. This sense of unquestioned loyalty and admiration for Erdoğan was by far one of the most striking observations that I came away with from the interviews, especially given how polarizing he had become for his detractors. Of course, there is no doubt this can also be attributed in part to the pro-AKP media's cultivation of a personality cult around Erdoğan.

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[360] Rusen Cakir and Fehmi Calmuk, Recep Tayip Erdogan, *Bir Donusum Oykusu* [Recep Tayip Erdogan, A Story of Transformation] (Istanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2001), 23.
[361] Soner Cagaptay, *The New Sultan: Erdogan and the Crisis of Modern Turkey*. London ; (New York: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 2017), 131.

It is also noteworthy that even after being in power for a decade Erdoğan did not lose sight of the importance of party organization. According to a news article in *Radikal* following the 2015 elections, in a meeting with AKP deputies Erdoğan harshly criticized some of them for not going to their electoral regions frequently enough and for spending too much time on Twitter. It was reported that he warned the deputies with the following words:

> "Is it possible to be such a thing as a deputy who does not visit his electoral region? You either do not become the candidate for parliament or, if you do, you have to do what this position requires. You cannot fulfill this requirement by using Twitter. You have to go in person and hug (*kucaklamak* in Turkish) the voters, you have to smell the soil (*toprak*)"[362]

Erdoğan himself was also personally involved in the selection of provincial chairs and candidate deputies, as well as ministers and mayors. Many of the party activists I interviewed pointed out that Erdoğan was very diligent in vetting candidates for any kind of position in the party, further demonstrating the tight control he exercised over the body. The tight control of the leadership over the rank-and-file is a key characteristic of personalistic membership parties. As one of the party activists told me confidentially there was a well-known expression used by party members to describe Erdoğan's tight grip over even the smallest branches of the organization: "this is his shop (*dükkan onun.)*" [363]

Demographic changes also played an important role in the strengthening of the AKP's political base and the party organization. The industrial policies pursued by successive Turkish governments in the 1980's and 90's and the lack of opportunity in the underdeveloped eastern provinces led to a large-scale influx of the rural population into

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[362] "Erdogan Vekillere Kizdi <Erdogan is furious at the MP's> Radikal, June 15, 2015.

[363] Kayhan Delibas, *Rise of Political Islam in Turkey, The: Urban Poverty, Grassroots Activism and Islamic Fundamentalism*. (London: I.B.Tauris, 2014), 149.

the cities.[364] These rural migrants brought with them the conservative and religious values of Anatolian villages that were significantly different from those living in urban areas. They lived in makeshift shantytowns on the outskirts of large cities and experienced difficulties integrating into urban culture. The government, from the outset did not have a policy regarding urban development and failed to respond to the needs of the urban migrants.[365] As a result, they quickly became a natural constituency for movements advocating alternatives to the political order that had largely ignored their needs. Hence, the urban poor and marginalized working class represented an important pool of potential voters and party workers for Islamist parties, in particular the Welfare Party and the AKP, which eventually made its biggest political gains within these migrant shantytowns commonly referred to as the "varoş." After taking control of Istanbul in 1994, the AKP skillfully developed infrastructure projects to improve living conditions in these areas, much of which already put into work by the Welfare Party and recruited to its ranks from these shantytowns, the party significantly expanded its support base among the working-class poor in Turkey's large urban areas.

The Early Years of the AKP (2002-2007)

Once in power, the AKP adopted a centrist position by downplaying Islamist rhetoric and projecting its political activity as pragmatic, non-ideological and "in service of the nation." Strategically, this served the two goals: overcoming the limitations of appealing only to an Islamist base and broadening the party's appeal to include the more

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[364] Istiklal Alper and Samira Yener, Gecekondu Arastirmasi [Research on Shantytowns] (Ankara: DPT, 1991), 84.

[365] Oguz Isik and Melih Pinarcioglu, *Nobetlese Yoksullu: Gecekondulasma ve Kent Yoksullari Sultanbeyli Ornegi* [Continuous Poverty: Shantytowns and the Urban Poor The Case of Sultanbeyli] (Istanbul: Iletisim, 2001), 165.

mainstream voters, and assuaging the fears of the military and the secular establishment.

The first phase of AKP government, which broadly extends from 2002 to 2007, was

driven by the prospect of formal EU membership and can be described as the party's

golden age. During this period, the party embarked on a series of reforms to improve

political and economic life in Turkey and stayed away from confrontational policies.[366]

To begin with, several articles of the 1982 Constitution were amended to extend

basic rights and freedoms. The capital punishment was outlawed.[367] The EU

harmonization packages passed by the AKP government, brought about significant

improvements in the freedom of expression, as well as in the freedom of press. The

controversial Article 301 of the Turkish penal code that punished insulting "Turkishness"

and the "Republic" was amended. With the amendments, such expressions would

constitute a criminal offense only if they posed a danger for public safety and in that case

the starting of a criminal investigation would be subject to the approval of the Minister of

Justice.[368]

As part of the EU accession agenda, the AKP also passed a number of laws in

2003 that represented a milestone in terms of asserting civilian control over the military

and reducing the power of the National Security Council (NSC). The NSC is a body

dominated by military generals responsible for ensuring that the government's domestic

and foreign policies are in line with the basic principles of the Kemalist revolution,

particularly secularism. While technically an advisory body, the NSC's recommendations

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[366] Sebnem Gumuscu, "Class, Status, and Party: The Changing Face of Political Islam in Turkey and Egypt:" *Comparative Political Studies*, February 26, 2010.

[367] Binnaz Toprak, "Islam and Democracy in Turkey," *Turkish Studies* 6, no. 2 (2005): 187–199.

[368] See Commission of the European Communities, "Turkey 2006 Progress Report," Commission Staff Working Documents, November 8, 2006, 62 and Commission of the European Communities, "Turkey 2007 Progress Report," Commission Staff Working Documents, November 6, 2007, 15.

were later assigned a priority in government decisions by the 1982 Constitution.[369] In the

Turkish political system, the NSC institutionalized the role of the military in the political

process and provided a mechanism by which the military could directly influence the

civilian leadership.

These reforms, in particular those restraining the powers of the military in the

political sphere helped the AKP, initially to consolidate its power and expand its base to

include Kurdish voters as well as some left-wing liberals. The AKP was strongly

motivated to reduce the role of the military (which had previously embarked on a

campaign to destroy the Islamist movement), and saw the EU as a tool for doing precisely

that while establishing a political framework that would expand religious tolerance and

ensure its own political survival. The EU provided a strong mandate for asserting civilian

control over the military and the AKP did not hesitate to make use of this agenda to

ensure that it would never be challenged again by a military intervention.

In an apparent departure from his previous efforts to avoid hot button issues,

Erdoğan and the AKP, with support from the Nationalist Movement Party, amended the

Higher Education Law in 2007 to allow women to wear the headscarf at state supported

colleges and universities. Three months later, the state prosecutor filed a case with the

Constitutional Court seeking AKP's closure and a ban on 70 of its leaders including

President Gül (who was no longer a member due to the apolitical nature of the

presidency) on the grounds that the party had become a "center of anti secular

activity."[370] Although the series of political reforms the AKP engineered in 2003 and

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[369] Ali Resul Usul. *Democracy in Turkey : The Impact of EU Political Conditionality*. (Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon England ; New York: Routledge, 2011), 134.

[370] Günes Murat Tezcür, "The Moderation Theory Revisited: The Case of Islamic Political Actors." *Party Politics*, August 3, 2009, 12-48.

2004 in order to secure a date for EU membership negotiations made it more difficult

both to close parties and to ban politicians from the political arena, the secularism of the

Turkish state remained a key pillar of the Constitution.[371] This case marked the beginning

of a new phase for the AKP, in which the dominant strategy became "controlled tension."

The possibility that the AKP could be closed down raised a whole series of

questions about who, given the state of the opposition, would govern the country if the

ruling party was dismantled. Supporters, and even some opponents, of AKP feared the

resulting instability and a return to direct military rule. When, in a separate case, the

Constitutional Court reversed the amendment on headscarves, effectively reinstituting the

ban, it seemed as if the AKP's days were numbered. In the end, Turkey's highest court

found the party guilty of being anti secularist but, in a 6-5 decision, decided not to close it

down, but rather to hold onto a portion of the state resources the AKP was due and warn

its leaders against any future anti secular activity.[372] As will be discussed in the next

chapter, this period convinced the AKP elite that a political appeal grounded mainly on

democracy, the European Union process, and rights and liberties would not be enough to

keep the party's core Islamist, nationalist, conservative and lower-income constituency

together let alone the ensure party's political survival. These factors along with the

particular set of circumstances under which the AKP interacted with secular state actors

together paved the way for the adaptation of the overwhelmingly right-wing populist

appeal and tension-increasing strategies by the AKP elite, which is the subject of chapter

five.

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[371] Menderes Çınar, "From Moderation to De-Moderation: Democratic Backsliding of the AKP in Turkey," 127–57, 2018.
[372] Soner Cagaptay, *The New Sultan: Erdogan and the Crisis of Modern Turkey*. London ; (New York: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 2017), 42.

Against the backdrop of the closure case initiated by the Constitution Court, the AKP received yet another resounding victory by winning 46.6 percent of the vote in the July 22, 2007 elections and 49.9 percent of the vote in the subsequent 2011 elections.[373] The results of these elections demonstrated the continuing success of the AKP's party organization and strategies, its leadership and its grassroots efforts. In this chapter, I argue that the AKP's tightly controlled, massive membership organization was active year-round and penetrated even the most remote corners of the country. Moreover, this massive and pervasive organization was built by and around Erdoğan's leadership and was carefully managed by professional marketing techniques. The party combined the characteristics of a mass-based party with the use of campaign professionals, centralized communication strategies and a charismatic leadership, what I refer to as a personalistic membership party.[374]

The BJP leads a Coalition Government in the 1990's

In the 1996 national election, the BJP emerged as India's single largest party, winning 161 of the 543 Lok Sabha constituencies and pushing Congress into second place.[375] The BJP was given the first chance to form a government as the single largest party; it failed to muster support from other non-Congress parties, almost all with a regional base and the government headed by Atal Behari Vajpayee resigned after 13 days. The experience was a wake up call for the BJP, as it underlined the party's isolation in national politics.

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[373] Muge Aknur, *Democratic Consolidation in Turkey: State, Political Parties, Civil Society, Civil-Military Relations, Socio-Economic Development, EU, Rise of Political Islam and Separatist Kurdish Nationalism.* (Universal Publishers, 2012), 214.
[374] Here I borrow elements from the typology put forward by Duverger and Panebianco in the literature on political parties. See Maurice Duverger, *Political Parties.* Science Editions, 1962.
[375] Christophe Jaffrelot, *The Hindu Nationalist Movement in India.* (Columbia University Press, 1998), 23.

As long as the party remained identified solely with assertive Hindu nationalism and anti-secularism, as expressed in its core three-point charter advocating for the Ram temple in Ayodhya, a Uniform Civil Code, and the removal of Article 370 regarding Jammu and Kashmir from the Constitution, it was destined to remain a marginal force in Indian politics.[376] This period illustrated the limits of political growth powered by the Ramjanambhoomi campaign.

It was at that point that the party, and the broader Hindutva movement, truly rediscovered the utility of Vajpayee, whose civil personality and style contrasted with the harsh, polarizing politics represented by Advani. Despite his seniority, Vajpayee had been sidelined in the party after the mid-1980's and he had stayed away from the Ramjanambhoomi campaign. The party put him forward as its prime ministerial nominee in 1996, realizing that the Advani candidacy would be an absolute failure. But playing the Vajpayee card in itself was not enough. In order to forge the electoral alliances with various regional, mostly secularist parties needed to access state power at the center (New Delhi) that would otherwise remain out of reach, the BJP was forced to formally shelve its three point anti-secularist agenda.[377] This strategic compromise, much short of renunciation, led to widespread frustration among the Hindutva movement's purists, such as the leaders of the VHP. But it enabled the BJP to lead two successive coalition governments at the center under Vajpayee's premiership, first in 1998-99 and then from

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[376] Sudipta Kaviraj, *The Imaginary Institution of India: Politics and Ideas*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 32.

[377] Scott Hibbard, *Religious Politics and Secular States: Egypt, India, and the United States*. Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), 133.

1999-2004, in partnership with an array of regional parties mostly based in eastern and southern Indian States, where the BJP was weak.[378]

The BJP-led alliance failed to win a majority in the mid-2004 general election, despite Vajpayee's personal popularity and the decent governance record of the coalition government. One factor that contributed to the defeat was the pogrom of Muslims, which occurred in Gujarat under Narendra Modi's watch in 2002. The first and only major outbreak of communal violence since the BJP assumed power in Delhi in 1998, the pogrom deeply frightened Muslims who feared what might happen if the BJP returned to power. A sizeable section of the electorate in many States, voted en masse for anti- BJP parties in 2004, as well as many Hindu middle class voters who were deeply disturbed by the Gujarat episode.[379]

The "hung" fractured Lok Sabha in 2004 allowed Congress to put together a coalition government with a few regional parties and outside support from the communist led bloc in parliament (the Congress and the BJP had won an almost equal number, 145 and 138 respectively, of the 543 Lok Sabha seats, with regional parties holding the rest). By the time the 2009 general election came around the BJP 1998-2004 alliance network had largely disintegrated, and Vajpayee had retired from politics due to ill age. The disorganized BJP failed to put together an appealing campaign and its prime ministerial candidate L.K. Advani did not evoke much popular confidence. The Congress led-alliance returned to power.[380]

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[378] Christophe Jaffrelot, *The Hindu Nationalist Movement in India*. (Columbia University Press, 1998), 39.
[379] Sumandra Bose, *Transofrming India: Challenges to the World's Largest Democracy*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013), 63.
[380] Ibid, 68.

The Congress-led coalition became deeply unpopular as its term progressed, mired in weak leadership, corruption scandals and general poor governance. By 2014, it was comprehensively discredited. Similar to the AKP, the BJP capitalized on the general dissatisfaction with established political elites with a message of strong leadership and improved governance delivered in charismatic style by its next generation leader, Narendra Modi of Gujarat, who was declared the party's prime ministerial candidate in mid-2013. In May 2014, the BJP won a historic majority in the Lok Sabha, 282 of the 543 parliamentary constituencies, powered by a Modi landslide in the States of Northern and Western India.[381] Most notably, it made significant advances in many parts of the country that were not the party's traditional bastions. Without the support of any ally, the BJP won a large chunk of votes in Jammu and Kashmir (36.4 per cent), West Bengal (16.8 per cent), Assam (36.5 per cent), Manipur (11.9 per cent), Arunachal Pradesh (46.1 per cent), and Orissa (21.5 per cent). In Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu, the BJP made important inroads with the help of alliance partners.

Its share of the nationwide vote was 31.3 percent, an all time high for the party. The BJP also managed to do this with an unprecedented vote swing, taking its share of the vote from 18.8 percent to 31.3 percent. This was the first time in thirty years, since the sweeping Congress victory in the December 1984 election just after Indira Gandhi's assassination, that any party won a Lok Sabha majority. With a few allied regional parties, the new Modi government's majority was even stronger – 336 seats, with 37 percent of the nationwide votes. The Congress won in just 44 constituencies, eight percent of the Lok Sabha, its share of the nationwide vote was just 19 percent.

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[381] "Narendra Modi's Landslide Victory Shatters Congress's Grip on India" *The Guardian*, May 16, 2014 Accessed March 13, 2020.

It is also very interesting that for the first time, nationally, the BJP also lead the Congress among lower castes, both Dalit and Scheduled Tribe voters. In fact, between the 2014 and 2009 elections the BJP gained proportionally more votes from the marginalized sections of Indian society than any other group. Not surprisingly, there was also an unparalleled consolidation of the upper castes and middle classes behind the BJP in 2014. In tandem, both these developments have helped the BJP acquire a dominant position. In the next section, I discuss how the BJP's well-oiled, highly efficient mass party organization with its dedicated cadres of party activists and charismatic leadership, what I have termed a personalistic-membership party, has made this remarkable electoral victory possible.

The 2014 Election: The BJP Comes To Power in a Historic Landslide

The 2014 electoral victory of the BJP, similar to the AKP's 2002 success, is one of resource mobilization and effective party organization led by the party's new leader Narendra Modi. In this context, I argue that the BJP's electoral success can be attributed to its development of a personalistic membership party, one that relies on a strong local presence and a dedicated cadre of party activists that carry out diligent organizational work reaching even the most remote corners of the country. During the 2014 campaign, Modi had access to an astonishing array of deeply entrenched civil-society organizations that had been doing the ideological groundwork for his victory for years as well as a robust party organization, especially in Northern India. [382] The landslide victory of the BJP was largely the story of this formidable party organization which consists of millions

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[382] Milan Vaishnav, "The BJP in Power: Indian Democracy and Religious Nationalism." Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, April 4, 2019. Accessed March 15, 2020.

of members recruited through "missed calls" (when recipients call back, they reach a BJP recruiter), effective polling booth committees active well before elections, including hundreds of thousands of "panna pramukhs" (BJP workers, each in charge of cultivating voters on a single page of the electoral register) and the foot soldiers of the RSS, delegated from every shakha (cells or local branches) in a state to interact with sensitive constituencies. This was complemented by campaign squads persistently visiting voters' homes with leaflets and arguments and a command structure that relayed instructions down the hierarchy with swift and unchallengeable authority.[383]

A member of the National Executive Committee of the BJP, Dr. Vijay Jolly pointed out to me in an interview that the BJP's organization is cloned from the RSS, which pays close attention to the local level, and, he argued that this is a major factor in its electoral success. According to Jolly, "In a country where more than 750 million vote at the general election the BJP has gone about its campaign in an incredibly organized manner. The BJP organization is extremely cohesive and well-structured at the national and state level, but also with respect to the district, the block, the mahalla (neighborhood) and the panchayat (village)."[384] In April 2020, the BJP stated that the party had more than 170 million registered members, which would make it the world's largest political party by membership. Even if there are few requirements attached to becoming a member, this large membership confers a massive organizational and mobilizational resource to the party. In a conference on the rise of the BJP following the 2014 elections, the famous Indian scholar, Yogendra Yadav spoke of the 4 M's: Modi, Money, Media and Machine.

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[383] Shashi Tharoor, "India's Cult of Modi by Shashi Tharoor." Project Syndicate, May 28, 2019. Accessed March 16, 2020.

[384] Interview with Dr. Vijay Jolly, Member of the National Executive Committee of the BJP and former Member of the State Legislature from Delhi April 14, 2020.

The latter, the BJP's electoral machine, is central to my argument here. Yadav seemed to echo this point in his remarks: "I don't know if any party in the world today has the kind of electoral machine that the BJP has."[385]

An interview with the BJP's National General Secretary, Ram Madhav, also revealed the importance the party attached to its organizational infrastructure for its electoral success. One of the first things he pointed out to me was that India has close to one million polling stations: "The BJP has its lowest units in up to 900,000 such polling station areas. Of the over 700,000 villages, BJP has units in most of them. Its leadership also comes from this grassroots, not in a top down fashion."[386] When asked about how the BJP leadership oversees the rank and file, Madhav spoke at length of the extensive training programs for its over half-a million party cadres which took place on a regular basis. He explained how this training involved organizational, ideological and governance based programs, lending further support to the point about how the BJP demonstrates a critical characteristic of a mass-based party, which places strong emphasis on party members education and indoctrination.

It is also important to note that the RSS gives strong support to the BJP at election time and this was substantiated in interviews with grassroots workers and sympathizers who create an "ecosystem" of support for Hindu nationalist causes. One of the Indian scholars I interviewed shared his experiences from the fieldwork he conducted in Uttarpradesh before the 2018 State Assembly elections: "I've talked to many small shop owners, merchants and traders at the local bazaar from semi-urban areas who are RSS members and go out and canvas for the BJP after their day job is over." He pointed out

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[385] Yogendra Yadav, "Making Sense of the 2019 Election", India Seminar.com
[386] Author's interview with Ram Madhav, National Secretary General of the BJP, May 19, 2020.

that the RSS had earned a lot of good will in these neighborhoods providing disaster relief and social services that when it is time for elections, many members will campaign actively on the BJP's behalf.[387] On the other hand, as the party's vote share increased substantially since the 1980's, the internal structure of the party's active workers and aspiring leadership went through crucial transformations as well. In particular at the state level, the inflow of aspiring political actors and volunteers from lower castes and especially from OBC's who did not have a background in the RSS increased substantially. These new recruits also significantly expanded the scope of the party's organizational infrastructure.

As Prashant Jha details in *How the BJP Wins* the party's efficient electoral machine mobilizes voters from every single constituent by relying on both conventional means such as canvassing in local districts but also by using more innovative ways of reaching voters. For example, the party has a very effective Information Technology cell. In 2014, the BJP's IT cell created thousands of WhatsApp groups and waged a data war frequently circulating provocative messages to shore up support. India is Whatsapp's biggest market with more than 200 million users and BJP activists have relied on Whatsapp along with other forms of social media such as Facebook much more creatively and strategically than its opponents. As one BJP supporter pointed out to me, there is even a "NaMo" app, by which you can follow Prime Minister Modi on the campaign trail, read his press briefings and watch his public meetings live.

In an interview with the author, Dr. Vijay emphasized the role played by public meetings as well as house-to-house visits by party workers, as the core of the party's

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[387] Interview with Dr. Ronojoy Sen, Senior Fellow at the Institute of South Asian Studies at the National University of Singapore, April 20, 2020.

organizational strategy. "As part of my campaign for the district of Saket in South Delhi,

we divided up the district map into smaller units and our dedicated party activists

knocked on every door in the neighborhood, working day and night before elections as

well as after."[388] In terms of grassroots activism, the party organization has also been

very effective in reaching out to voters who have benefited from the welfare schemes

delivered directly by the BJP and converting these beneficiaries into voters. As one of my

interviewees explained:

> "I think what happened was that there has been a conversion of the citizen into the labharthi (beneficiary), and the labharthi into the voter. Like I said, it is not as if people did not benefit from schemes earlier. But the difference here is that, the BJP not only had beneficiaries, but also a labharthi pramukh, appointed by the party, for every 10 booths on the ground. The task of the labharthi pramukh in the team was to go to the people, get them photographed if benefited from a scheme, and put it out on social media, videos, media. So more importantly, if you didn't get the scheme, they would say don't worry, it is on its way."[389]

With the help of this type of targeted campaigning and an extensive grassroots

organization now energized by Modi, the party was able to construct a broad-ranging

social coalition in 2014 that moved beyond the party's traditional upper caste voter base

to include voters belonging to marginalized communities, including OBC's, Dalits, and

Scheduled Tribes. As the name Sangh Parivar (literally "family of organizations") itself

makes clear, Hindu nationalists had long given priority to a "sanghathanist"

(organizational) approach to growing their social presence and political clout.

It is also important here to emphasize the role played by Modi's leadership in the

2014 elections. What Modi did was use his own charisma, vision, and personal story

(including his status as an OBC) to translate these connections into votes in a way that

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[388] Interview with Dr. Vijay Jolly, Member of the National Executive Committee of the BJP and former Member of the State Legislature from Delhi April 14, 2020.
[389] Author's interview with Vandita Mishar, Writer for the Indian Express, May 8, 2020.

leaders before him had failed to do. He also had a constant presence on multiple media platforms during the campaign, including TV, radio, newspapers, and social media. Modi's penetration into all means of communication and the control of the media narrative was crucial in transforming his popularity into political mobilization. In an interview with the author, M.J. Akbar, the National Spokesperson for the BJP during the 2014 election and a Member of Parliament aptly characterized Modi's role as a "catalyst", referring to the way in which he was able attract a vast number of non-traditional voters to his vision.[390] According to the CSDS-Lokniti post-poll survey, a third of those who voted for the BJP said that they would have voted differently had Modi not been the prime ministerial candidate. This is why I refer to these parties as personalistic, as members and supporters often exhibit "loyalty to persons rather than to impersonal ideologies, institutions, or rules."

In addition to the party's existing organizational infrastructure, the BJP's star campaigner Narendra Modi was very effective in drawing what political scientists have called "vote mobilizers" towards his party, particularly through his media presence. Vote mobilizers are individuals whose support for a particular party go beyond simple voting and instead involve monetary donations, door-to-door canvassing, and leaflet/poster distribution. What distinguishes "vote mobilizers" from regular party activists is that while capable of increasing both turnout and vote share for their chosen party they display little party loyalty or partisanship although in the case of the BJP most of the mobilizers ultimately stayed with the party post-2014 and were absorbed into the party's organization. According to a study of 2014 National Election Surveys in India, Modi

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[390] Author's interview with MJ Akbar, Member of Parliament from the BJP and National Spokesperson for the BJP in 2014, Delhi, April 6, 2020.

drew more of these mobilizers to the BJP than other leaders drew to their own parties in

2014, in particular Congress, and even more than Vajpayee attracted to the BJP in the

2004 general election.[391]

This is important because in a country as large and diverse as India vote

mobilizers can supplement the party's grassroots mobilization efforts and help get leaders

elected. They do so by turning out the vote for the party of their choice. Even in countries

like the United States where access to media is widespread, it has been experimentally

shown that face-to-face mobilization remains the most effective way to turn out the

vote.[392] The success of the AKP's dedicated party cadres with face-to-face grassroots

activities is another case in point. In India, where media penetration remains low in the

rural areas and social ties and extended family and neighborhood relations are key, vote

mobilizers are arguably even more important. Vote mobilizers, exposed to Modi often

through the media once drawn to the party for a particular election, help that party reach

India's voters in semi-urban and rural constituencies, particularly those in hard to reach

places, more cheaply, personally and persuasively than the party could manage if

campaigning alone. In the 2014 election, merely 19 per cent of the BJP's vote mobilizers

were actually party members but expanded the party's organizational reach and their

mobilizational efforts substantially. [393]

[391] Pradeep K. Chhibber and Susan L. Ostermann "The BJP's Fragile Mandate: Modi and Vote Mobilizers in the 2014 General Elections", *Studies in Indian Politics* , vol.2, no. 2, (2014): 137–151.
[392] Alan Gerber and Donald Green, "The effects of canvassing, telephone calls, and direct mail on voter turnout: A field experiment,"*American Political Science Review,* Vol. *94*, No. 3: (2000), 653–663.
[393] Pradeep K. Chhibber and Susan L. Ostermann "The BJP's Fragile Mandate: Modi and Vote Mobilizers in the 2014 General Elections", *Studies in Indian Politics*, vol.2, no. 2, (2014): 137–151.

The Role of Leadership: Modi, Hindutva 2.0 and Developmental Populism

Similar to the Turkish Islamists focus on economic grievances in 2002, Modi's victory in

the 2014 elections, and his ability to draw "vote mobilizers" can also be attributed to his

emphasis on economic growth, modernization of India's infrastructural capacities and the

slogan of "development with all, for all", what I have termed Hindutva 2.0. One BJP

politician summed up this thinking to me in an interview as: "Our philosophy is not

communalism. Our philosophy is governance."[394] This philosophy appealed to a large

segment of society, what is sometimes referred to in journalistic accounts as "aspirational

India" the hundreds of millions of mainly young Indians of disparate communities and

backgrounds across the vast country who share the aspiration to materially better their

lives through access to education, training and jobs that assure decent livelihoods.[395] It is

noteworthy that 65 percent of the Indian population is between the ages of fifteen to

thirty-five. M.J. Akbar, a Member of Parliament for the BJP, underlined the importance

of this universal appeal in a country as diverse as India as the driving force behind

Modi's success: "BJP offered a leader who had experience in government and promised

good governance and a better life. This promise was made to all the people in a call for

national unity. By doing this, he gave Hindu nationalism a new dimension."[396]

In February 2013, Modi gave a speech at a Delhi college. That speech might be

seen as defining the campaign he and the BJP launched in 2014.[397] Contrary to the

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[394] Interview with Dr. Vijay Jolly, Member of the National Executive Committee of the BJP and former Member of the State Legislature from Delhi April 14, 2020.

[395] Milan Vaishnav, "The BJP in Power: Indian Democracy and Religious Nationalism." Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, April 4, 2019), 31-35.

[396] Author's interview with MJ Akbar, Member of Parliament from the BJP, Delhi, April 6, 2020.

[397] Narendra Modi Addresses Students at Delhi University's SRCC', *The Times of India* (6 Feb. 2013) http:// timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Narendra-Modi-addresses-students-at-Delhi-Universitys-SRCC/articleshow/ 18367028.cms, Accessed March 20, 2020.

characterization of the BJP as a Hindu nationalist party, Modi's speech focused exclusively on the economy, governance, India's development record and the high hopes youth had for their future. As the campaign gathered momentum, Modi added the slogan "Congress-mukt Bharat" ('Congress-free India') to this script; anti-dynasty being another major plank of his platform. It may not be an exaggeration to say that Modi kept his entire campaign within the broad framework of that speech, deviating only to mention at some point his "humble origins" in order to appeal to OBCs.

As a politician, Narendra Modi earned his credentials as the Chief Minister who presided over a business friendly, efficient, inclusive model of economic governance in Gujarat, similar to Erdogan who had a proven track record of being a capable mayor focusing on delivering economic growth in Turkey's largest city, Istanbul. It is also noteworthy that both leaders campaigned as pro-business reformers, with an aversion to the heavy-handed form of statism favored by the opposition parties in both countries, namely Congress and its allies in India and for most of its history the CHP in Turkey. This neo-liberal form of social conservatism in opposition to state secularism and statism was the hallmark of both parties as they sought to challenge the establishment parties.[398] The contrast with Indira Gandhi, for example, is striking, who was an active proponent of using the power of the state to redistribute wealth, as exemplified by the nationalization of banks and the insurance industry during her time as Prime Minister.

Similar to the economic reforms that opened up the Turkish economy in the 1980's, the liberalization of the statist Indian economy from 1991 onwards, in response to global market realities, led to the empowerment of an increasingly wealthy business

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[398] Basharat Peer, *A Question of Order: India, Turkey, and the Return of Strongmen*. (New York, NY: Columbia Global Reports, 2017), 53.

community that was anxious to see more obstacles removed to liberalization and rent-seekers eliminated, and willing to finance political change to make it happen. Just like the AKP benefited from the financial support of the emerging Anatolian business class, Prime Minister Modi and the BJP benefited from this too, not least in generous funding from the capitalist nouveaux riches. The BJP is by far the most well funded political party in Indian politics.[399] As Dr. Ronojoy Sen of the Institute of South Asian Studies at the National University of Singapore pointed out in an interview: "According to some estimates, the size of the Indian middle class grew fivefold in the last ten years and is currently around 250 million. This demographic shift is important because middle class voters are more likely to be against state regulations and subsidies and thwarted business development."[400]

Two eminent scholars of Indian politics, Pradeep Chhibber and Rahul Verma of UCLA refer to these kinds of debates on the extent to which the state should dominate society, regulate social norms, and redistribute private property as the *politics of statism* in a recent book called Ideology and Identity in India. They argue that it is the politics of statism, as well as the *politics of recognition*, a term for how states should accommodate the various marginalized groups and protect minority rights from assertive majorities that constitute the dimensions of ideological space in Indian party politics. According to their framework based on an analysis of NES data and opinion polls, the BJP built a winning coalition in 2014 by mobilizing voters who wanted to limit the politics of statism in

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[399] The BJP receives nearly all of the electoral financing in the system. After the controversial 'electoral bond' system was implemented to allow for anonymous political donations and remove certain limits on corporate donations, one can only calculate to whom donations are given, not the source. The data from fiscal year 2017-2018 provided by the Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) shows that the BJP received 210 crore out of the total of 222 crore in electoral bond financing, a whopping 95% of all electoral financing through the electoral bond method.
[400] Interview with Dr. Ronojoy Sen, Senior Fellow at the Institute of South Asian Studies at the National University of Singapore, April 20, 2020.

addition to energizing its traditional base of voters who were opposed to the politics of

recognition (most specifically cast based reservations in education and government

jobs).[401]

As Prime Minister since mid-2014, Modi has worked hard to consolidate

Hindutva 2.0, a contemporary version of the Hindu nationalist movement in the Modi era,

one that focuses on socio-economic development as opposed to the outright rejection of

the "pseudo secularism" of the Indian state and a more ideological Hindu nationalism.[402]

In this new discourse, however, Modi has in fact sometimes attempted to mix up issues of

development, nationalism and Hindu identity. For example, in one of his speeches, he

argues that nationalism is development and being nationalist is the core value of

Hindutva. His "Hindutva" is associated more with "national development", thus

bypassing issues of inter-community relations and minority rights.[403] As one Indian

scholar put it to me:

> "The 2014 message was carefully crafted to assuage the Indian people that Modi
> could go beyond his provincial background as a Gujarati politician and also rise above
> the hardcore Hindutva ideology to become a national leader. He was also not involved in
> any major corruption scandal which made his promises of clean government quite
> credible."[404]

In terms of communicating with the public, it is also interesting that Modi has a

personalized and presidential style mass communication strategy. Modi does not hold

press conferences, or give interviews to journalists. Instead he communicates directly

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[401] Pradeep K. Chhibber, *Ideology and Identity: The Changing Party Systems of India*. Reprint edition. (New York, NY, United States of America: Oxford University Press, 2018), 4.

[402] Pseduo secularism is a common refrain of Hindu nationalists who argue that religious minorities especially Muslims receive preferential treatment by the state, also known as vote-bank politics.

[403] In one of his interviews, Modi clarified that there is no contradiction between Hindu nationalism and development. Reuters (12 July 2013) [http://blogs.reuters.com/india/2013/07/12/interview-with-bjp-leader-naren dra-modi/, Accessed March 20, 2020].

[404] Interview with Dr. Ronojoy Sen, Senior Fellow at the Institute of South Asian Studies at the National University of Singapore, April 21, 2020.

with people through Twitter (daily) and through a monthly radio address called Mann ki

Baat (Thoughts on my Mind) which is transmitted by the state-run All India Radio on

Sunday mornings. The daily tweets reach a predominantly younger and metropolitan

demographic and the monthly radio a predominantly rural audience.

During his 2014 election campaign Modi came out strongly in favor of

globalization and free trade, distancing himself from the *swadeshi* (self-reliance) wing of

the BJP, and the more statist and pro small business outlook of the RSS. In 1987, Lal

Krishna Advani, former President of the BJP, had made the party's pro-Swadeshi

position clear arguing that the "cure to India's economic problems does not lie in credits

or technology from abroad, but in giving a boost to domestic production and exports

based on mobilization of national resources," but the party gradually shifted its position

in order to please its core constituency of urban, middle class, well-educated Hindus

many of whom were employed in the private sector.[405] On the campaign trail, Modi even

declared that "government has no business to do business," an assertion that raised the

prospects that his government might privatize India's often inefficiently run state-owned

enterprises, something that had been frowned upon in Sangh circles since India's

economic liberalization in 1991.[406]

Modi's attitude toward FDI during the 2014 campaign was best summed up by

the promise of "red carpet, not red tape" for foreign investors. The party's 2014 election

manifesto suggested that, unlike the RSS, the party was less concerned with the virtues of

family-owned small businesses. The manifesto promised to eliminate obstacles for the

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[405] National Economic Resolution, February 4, 1987.
[406] Shashank Chouhan, "Quote, Unquote Narendra Modi," *Reuters*, July 12, 2013.
http://blogs.reuters.com/india/

private sector so that Indian companies could be globally competitive. Much to the disappointment of the Sangh's economic nationalists, the Modi government has increased FDI limits across sectors and eased regulatory burdens on foreign investors, moves that seem to have paid off in the form of a sharp increase in FDI in flows from $36 billion in 2013–2014 to $62 billion in 2017–2018.[407]

In an ironic resemblance to Erdogan's *New Turkey*, Modi too called for a *New India* to be created by 2022 in his victory speech at the BJP office in New Delhi after the party won a crucial state election in March 2017 in Uttar Pradesh. This signaled his and the party's growing confidence that the BJP government was on course to be reelected to a second-five year term in the Lok Sabha since 2020 also happens to be the 75th anniversary of India's independence. M.J Akbar's argued that once the BJP won the 2014 election Modi turned the party from: "a party of ideology, to one of governance." His statement: "Once you reach Delhi, you have to govern from the center," reflects the thinking behind the focus on economic development and the pragmatism of the party in its early years.

For example, one of Modi's government's signature schemes, *Swachh Bharat* or Clean India, a nationwide drive to promote cleanliness and public hygiene, was launched shortly after he took office with a deadline of 2019. Under this scheme, the government built around 100 million toilets for households with no access to basic sanitation.[408] With the cooperation of telecommunication companies, since 2015 the Modi government has worked to link 300 million Indians at the bottom of the economic pyramid to the banking

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[407] Indian Ministry of Commerce Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade, "Quarterly Fact Sheet: Fact Sheet on Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) From April, 2000 to June, 2018."

[408] Biswas, Reality Check team, Soutik. "Seven Trump Claims about India Fact-Checked." *BBC News*, February 24, 2020, sec. India. https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-51615907.

systems through the Internet, by increasing Internet access not only in cities but also in rural areas.

One of the BJP politicians I interviewed, pointed out to me that it would not have been possible to coordinate a response to COVID-19 had these communication systems not been put in place by Prime Minister Modi in early 2015.[409] The party organization has also strategically capitalized on theses schemes and programs, making more explicit the connection between the delivery of the service and the BJP, in its efforts to persuade voters. This emphasis on schemes and development was also reiterated when I asked a member of the BJP's National Executive Committee, Dr. Vijay Jolly what kind of debates took place during the regular party meetings. His response was unequivocal: "99 percent of the time the conversation is on topics regarding programs that can promote development, how to increase employment opportunities and education, women's empowerment and sanitation as well as access to basic services."

Another characteristic of what I've called developmental populism is a tendency to describe infrastructure projects in grandiose terms and turn their inaugurations into public forums for the leader's long speeches. Thus the inauguration in April 2017 of South Asia's longest road tunnel, a 9-kilometer tunnel bored through mountains in the Jammu region of the state of Jammu and Kashmir, became an occasion for a rally of 100,000 people addressed by Prime Minister Modi.[410] A month later Modi travelled to the State of Assam in India's northeast, where the BJP won a State election in 2016, to inaugurate the "country's longest bridge" constructed to connect Assam with Arunachal Pradesh, a much smaller neighboring State, followed by mass rally. These projects

[409] Author's interview with MJ Akbar, Member of Parliament from the BJP, Delhi, April 6, 2020.
[410] "PM Modi Inaugurates Country's Longest Bridge in Assam, *Economic Times*, 26 May 2017.

highlight the success of Modi's brand of developmental populism, which simultaneously

taps into notions of national pride and projects state power.[411]

Developmental populism is also central to Erdoğan's political strategy. For his

part, Erdoğan has also been very effective in capitalizing on such mega development

projects, which included a major expansion of the Istanbul International Airport, the

Trans-Anatolian Natural Gas Pipeline to transport gas from Azerbaijan to Turkey, and a

new nuclear power plant in Sinop. The venture that most clearly highlights Erdoğan's

mastery of developmental populism, however, is the Istanbul Canal. This 12.6 billion

dollar project, referred to as the "crazy project" by the media aims to relieve the water

traffic on the Bosporus strait by providing an alternative, parallel waterway from the

Black Sea to the Sea of Marmara.[412] The canal carries a symbolic significance that

appeals to Erdoğan's cult of personality; it has been proposed several times in history by

Turkish leaders but never undertaken, including Suleiman the Magnificent. If the project

is completed, Erdoğan can claim to have succeeded where even the most legendary of the

Ottoman Sultans failed.

Finally, the impressive performance of the BJP in some Southern and Western

states, which are generally averse to the Hindutva politics of the BJP, can be attributed to

BJP's campaign strategy and the strategic messaging of then Prime Ministerial candidate

Modi. In his relentless campaign rallies prior to the 2014 election, Modi, in addition to

playing the development card, sought to broaden his territorial support by appealing to

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[411] Milan Vaishnav, "The BJP in Power: Indian Democracy and Religious Nationalism." Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, April 4, 2019), 31-35.

[412] Tessa Fox, "Erdoğan's 'crazy Project'': New Istanbul Canal to Link Black and Marmara Seas.'" *The Guardian*, February 17, 2020, sec. Environment. Accessed March 16, 2020.

distinctive regional sentiments and customs.[413] This "regional messaging" took place despite the fact that the BJP's campaign organization was highly centralized.

A review of the speeches which Modi delivered in various parliamentary constituencies reveals that he not only wore the traditional headgear and costume representative of each state and spoke a few opening sentences in the appropriate regional language, but also that he attempted to play to the sentiments of regional parties.[414] Modi's speeches praised the ideals of revered state leaders from an earlier era, while criticizing the current regional state leaders for not upholding their predecessors' guiding principles and not being true to their own people. It is instructive to note that Modi focused on constituency-specific local issues and promised favors tailored to each state's regional concerns and local circumstances. Overall, the BJP's campaign was multilayered and carefully calibrated to state-specific contexts and to local factors at the constituency level.

On the campaign trail, Modi also assured states of a specific formula to achieve double-digit growth. He promised to deliver the best public services in each state, citing the example of Gujarat, which he claimed to have modernized himself during his term in office as its Chief Minister. As Dr. Ronojoy Sen of the Institute of South Asian Studies at the National University of Singapore summarized: "With a huge amount of funds in its war chest, not only was the BJP able to micro-manage the elections down to the booth level, but it was also able to mount a concerted and targeted campaign, both on traditional

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[413] Basharat Peer, *A Question of Order: India, Turkey, and the Return of Strongmen*. (New York, NY: Columbia Global Reports, 2017), 53.
[414] Oliver Heath, "The BJP's Return to Power: Mobilization, Conversion and Vote Swing in the 2014 Indian Elections." *Contemporary South Asia* 23, no. 2 (April 3, 2015): 123–35.

and digital media."[415] All of these strategies detailed above were instrumental in convincing voters and mobilizing the party organization.

Against this background, Modi's BJP won another resounding victory in the 2019 general elections. It won 303 seats in the Lok Sabha, adding 21 seats to its 2014 total and surpassing the 273 seats needed to form a majority. The BJP's coalition, meanwhile, expanded from 338 to 352 seats, or nearly two-thirds of the total elected seats (543) in the lower house. This will make the passing of laws in parliament much easier for the BJP and even raises the possibility of constitutional amendments. In terms of vote share, the BJP's rose six percentage points to 37.4 percent. Without a doubt, the BJP's well oiled and effective political machine, owing to its strong local presence and its massive membership organization had succeeded in putting together an even larger coalition than 2014. Developmental populism and Hindutva 2.0 was the BJP's main attraction to the broader Indian electorate, and Modi, as the charismatic, powerful leader of its program of modernization is the face of that agenda.[416] This is very different from the Hindutva mobilization of the first half of the 1990's carried out by L. K. Advani, when the electoral strategy was built on the contentious and inherently polarizing Ramjanambhooomi agitation described earlier. Gary Jacobson, a constitutional law scholar and expert of Indian secularism anticipated the shift form agitational politics to Hindutva 2.0 writing in 2003:

"While the occasional need to mobilize the Sangh Parivar's political base ensures that the more extreme, visceral appeals to Hindu solidarity and privilege will not soon disappear from the rhetorical landscape of Indian politics, the basic arithmetic of electoral

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[415] Interview with Dr. Ronojoy Sen, Senior Fellow at the Institute of South Asian Studies at the National University of Singapore, April 20, 2020.

[416] Gettleman, Jeffrey, Kai Schultz, Ayesha Venkataraman, and Sameer Yasir, "India Election Gives Modi a 2nd Term. Here Are 5 Takeaways." *The New York Times*, May 23, 2019, sec. World. Accessed March 16, 2020. https://www.nytimes.com/2019/05/23/world/asia/india-election-narendra-modi.html.

ascendance and governing continuity means these appeals will be muted in favor of arguments more acceptable to moderate sensibilities, within the broader electorate."[417]

This emphasis on development, personified by Prime Minister Modi, has enabled the BJP to expand its appeal much beyond the geographic and social limits of its core base. Under Modi's leadership, the party has developed at least a critical mass of support in almost all parts of India and amongst nearly all segments of society, except for one, Muslims. That doesn't seem to worry BJP strategists because they feel nationwide political hegemony is achievable without Muslim support. Although the continuing "othering" of Muslims has not been an essential element of Modi's strategy, even in 2014, the BJP campaign strategically deployed pro-Hindu majoritarian sentiment in pockets of the country where it felt that message would find resonance. As one Indian scholar told me the "at the subtle level the communalist message was still there."[418]

For example, on the campaign trail in 2014 Modi made several divisive veiled references to Muslim communities. In Assam, he made a distinction between Muslim and non- Muslim immigrants to the country, with reference to "infiltrating Bangladeshis" in particular."[419] Once in power, he would preside over the passing of a law that prohibits those Muslim immigrants from seeking citizenship in India. In Karnataka, he sought to link the beef trade dominated by Muslims to terrorism, and in a state election soon thereafter he sought to warn rally-goers that his opponents would seek to give benefits for backward Hindu caste groups to "another community." Other BJP campaigners also frequently invoked Hindu pride and mythology, stoking a feeling of majoritarian

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[417] Gary Jacobson, The Wheel of Law, 189.
[418] Interview with Dr. Ronojoy Sen, Senior Fellow at the Institute of South Asian Studies at the National University of Singapore, April 20, 2020.
[419] Jyoti Punwani, "Modi's Barb About Muslims Isn't Surprising—Divisive Rhetoric Marked His 2014 Poll Speeches Too," Scroll.in, October 28, 2015.

victimhood. In the eastern state of Bihar, a BJP candidate said in a campaign speech that those who did not vote for Modi should seek exile in Muslim-majority Pakistan. Modi later made him a junior minister.[420] In an Uttar Pradesh district that had freshly faced interreligious violence, Modi's closest aide, Amit Shah, now the BJP's president and a member of parliament, called on voters to exact "revenge."[421]

Perhaps most importantly, the BJP has failed to put forward any Muslim candidates for political office. In a country where some 172 million Muslims reside, more than all of the Muslims living in countries in the Middle East combined, this is striking. Of course, they are, in one sense, still a minority (only 14 percent of the Indian population), but in another sense a huge minority. As an Indian academic lamented to me: "the Congress (party) always had Muslim candidates for various elections in the country. It was not only in accord with the secular credo but also an assessment of which constituency would be better off with a Muslim candidate."[422] During Vajpayee's term the BJP followed this norm but Modi never even tried it. As Congress MP Shashi Tharoor pointed out in a televised debate between him and one of the BJP's ardent defenders Swapan Dasgupta: "Modi's message to the Muslim community has been, for our electoral victory: We do not need you." It is telling that Modi has not once made a comment acknowledging the many deaths of Indian Muslims by Hindu nationalists in the various riots and lynching that have taken place since he assumed office in 2014."[423] The

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[420] "Modi Critics Told to Go to Pakistan After Polls," *Dawn*, April 20, 2014, https://www.dawn.com/news/1101099.
[421] Amit Shah Calls for 'Revenge' in Muza arnagar," *Hindu*, September 10, 2014, https://www.thehindu.com/news/ national/bjp-president-amit-shah-chargesheeted-for- objectionable-speech-during-lok-sabha-polls/ article6397604.ece.
[422] Interview with Rajendra Abhyankar, Former diplomat and India's Ambassador to the EU April 9, 2020.
[423] Interview with Professor Ashutosh Varshney, the Director of the Center of Contemporary South Asia and Professor at Brown University, April 14, 2020.

Hindu nationalist policies of the BJP, especially at the state level and the right-wing populist leadership of Modi will be explored in more detail in the following chapter.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I argue that the electoral success of both the AKP and the BJP can be attributed to the development of a personalistic membership party, which is distinguished from other types of political parties, in particular elite-based or cadre parties by the party's robust local presence as well as its massive membership organization that is active year-round and tightly controlled by the central leadership. I detail how the AKP's real source of strength and landslide electoral victory in 2002 stemmed from its organizational infrastructure and attention to grassroots mobilization. The fact that each neighborhood had an "organizer", who in turn appointed representatives to collect information about the age, ethnicity, religious origin and place of birth of the residents on each street and periodically checked in on them year round, was an unprecedented form of political organization in Turkish politics until then. At the sub-district level inspectors reviewed the work of neighborhood organizers every week and reported back to the party headquarters. The party enjoyed a command structure that relayed instructions down the hierarchy with swift and unchallengeable authority but was also open to receive feedback from the organizers out on the field. This kind of disciplined, hierarchical organization, which exercised strict control and supervision over the rank and file was chosen by the party elite to overcome the tensions between the ideologically motivated party cadres and the more pragmatic party leaders focused on expanding the party's base.

Moreover, this massive and pervasive organization was built by and around Erdoğan's charismatic leadership, which is why I refer to the party as personalistic. In the early 2000's, Erdoğan's focus on economic issues and his brand of developmental populism helped the AKP broaden its appeal beyond conservative voters to include former center right voters, moderate Islamists, nationalists, and even a certain segment of the former center left. Erdogan's life story and communication style resonated with the Turkish masses who felt marginalized and excluded by the secular establishment, in particular with respect to the state's treatment of religious groups and individuals in the public sphere, also referred to as restrictive secularism in chapter two.

Turkey's political landscape has been transformed since 2002. The AKP's successive electoral victories represent the rise and entrenchment of a hegemonic political party for the first time since the transition to multiparty politics in Turkey in 1948. Under Narendra Modi's leadership, the BJP's explicit ambition is also to emerge and establish itself as a hegemonic party, surpassing what the Congress was after independence. It does face some challenges in realizing that ambition, especially as it is weaker in most of the states of eastern and southern India. But the ambition has been making significant progress since Modi's 2014 victory. As of the end 2019, the BJP runs 18 of India's 29 State governments, covering over 60 percent of India's population, either on its own (12) or in coalition with allied local parties (6).

The landslide win of the BJP in the historic 2014 elections can also be attributed to the successful grassroots mobilization by the panna pramukhs and the labarthi pramukhs of the BJP party organization, as well as the foot soldiers of the RSS who have helped BJP candidates in places where the organization had previously not been strong.

Moreover, Modi's message of good governance and developmental populism has played a significant role in persuading voters and expanding the BJP's base beyond the geographical limits of its core constituency especially among lower castes and the poor sometimes referred to as the "Modi effect." In the process of this expansion, the BJP has become a party of different meanings for different sections of society. To its core constituency, it has continued to be a party of Hindutva, to the OBC's it represents a vehicle of political power, a vehicle articulating and absorbing their democratic upsurge, for devout Hindus it represents the religious assertion of the Hindu religion and to the new and upwardly mobile lower middle class the party represents new possibilities of economic advancement. Following the 2014 general election, the BJP steadily increased its electoral footprint across India but has adopted a more nationalist and majoritarian discourse and set of policies, which will be explored in the following chapter.

Chapter 5
Right-wing populism in Turkey and India: Modi and Erdoğan at the helm

This chapter examines the populist and majoritarian turn taken by religious parties to establish themselves as hegemonic political actors once they assume power by elections. Turkey and India are the only examples of developing countries with an experience of secularism in which religious nationalists have come to power by democratic means and now have a record to show for. What kind of religious or nationalist policies did they pursue while in power? How can we explain the populist and perhaps even authoritarian turn religious nationalism has taken in both countries? In particular in the Turkish case, what explains the change in the AKP's initially more moderate and democratic agenda? Likewise, how do we account for Modi's most recent efforts to pivot from the focus on development and good governance, referred to as Hindutva 2.0 in the previous chapter, to pursue a more overtly religious, divisive Hindu nationalist agenda?

In this chapter, I argue that both the AKP and the BJP have reverted to right-wing populism in their political discourse and have pursued religious nationalist policies, particularly since their second term in power. Populism is a difficult term to define but right-wing populists share a number of key characteristics. I define populism as a set of ideas, a discourse, not simply a style of politics. Its roots lie in the idea of popular sovereignty and it focuses heavily on the contrast between the "people" and the "elite." The people are simple, pure and virtuous while the elite are often portrayed as evil, corrupt and self-interested. Charismatic leaders are the authentic representatives of the "people" and the "masses" and often position themselves firmly against established political elites. This is a significant aspect of both Modi and Erdoğan's appeal, as the

former rallied successfully against the corrupt Congress dynasty and the latter against the so-called Kemalist establishment, the "secular elite."

For populists, since popular wishes are best expressed in elections, democracy is overwhelmingly about elections. The non-elected institutions of oversight, such as the judiciary, the press, civil society organizations, which normally constrain democratic government between elections, must follow electoral mandates, what Erdoğan calls "the national will." In other words, accordıng to populists popular will expressed via elections should be unconstrained by constitutions, laws of the land, or the roles and rules of non-elected institutions. For any observer of Turkish politics, this is a familiar theme that runs through most of Erdoğan's public announcements and motivates his political maneuvers. Populists claim that, in light of popular will, laws even constitutions can and should be changed, as will be described in more detail below. Within the government structure, executives and legislatures are superior to courts for the former express popular wishes.[424]

Finally, populists contend that charismatic and authentic leaders should have a direct, unmediated relationship with the masses, the people. This relationship should not be interrupted by intermediate modes of communication, for example the media.[425] In this context, it is interesting to note that Modi never gives interviews to journalists and instead communicates directly with people through Twitter (daily) and through a monthly radio address called Mann ki Baat (Thoughts on my Mind). Likewise, Erdoğan delivers two or three speeches every week broadcast on national television in his charismatic and combative style, one that has clearly struck a chord with the Turkish masses. Populists

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[424] Jan-Werner Müller, *What Is Populism*? (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), 23.
[425] Cas Mudde, "The Populist Zeitgeist", Government and Opposition, Vol 39, No:3.

also hold that the media should follow the wishes of those leaders who represent the popular will, which is why Erdoğan was adamant about silencing critical media outlets and buying off media companies to build his own media empire. Finally, populist leaders are also intent on exercising complete control and dominance over their party organizations. The next section describes in detail how Erdoğan has eliminated alternatives sources of power within the AKP, hence the term a personalistic-membership organization. There is growing evidence that Modi is doing the same.

Populists often ask: "Who are the people?" If the answer is that a religious, ethnic or racial majority constitutes the people that is right-wing populism. This kind of populism is anti-pluralist, hostile to ethnic and religious minorities, and inhospitable to immigrants who are different from the majority community. Populism of the right thus tends to acquire the form of majoritarianism, unconstrained by minority rights. It has recently been called "electoral democracy" or "illiberal democracies" which is a term that is now commonly being used by scholars to refer to both Turkey and India.[426]

The Case of the AKP: From Muslim Democrats to Muslim Nationalists

Of the religious political movements that are integrated into the formal political process, Turkey's AKP is arguably one of the most successful in winning elections in the developing world. Since coming to power in 2002, the AKP has won five parliamentary elections, three sets of nationwide local elections, one presidential election by popular vote and two referenda between 2002 and early 2020.[427] In the first period, which roughly

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[426] Yascha Mounk, *The People vs. Democracy: Why Our Freedom Is in Danger and How to Save It.* Cambridge, Massachusetts; London, England: Harvard University Press, 2018.

[427] Carlotta Gall, "Erdogan's Victory in Turkey Election Expands His Powers" *The New York Times*, June 24, 2018. Accessed Dec 11, 2019.

lasted until the AKP's final victory against the secular establishment in 2010 the former seemed to represent a moderate force.[428] As the AKP consolidated power at the expense of Turkey's secular establishment, its' increasing authoritarian political orientation served to reinforce the secularists claims that Turkey's Islamists were never fully committed to democracy to begin with.

Since the 2011 elections, the AKP's political stance sharply contradicts earlier promises and policies. The AKP has not followed through with its promises of a Kurdish opening, turning to the support of the right wing nationalists instead, maintained Turkey's centrist political structures and allowed Ergenekon trials of alleged coup plotters to be show trials, violating the principle of due process, thereby casting a shadow of doubt over its democratic intentions.[429] Policies that the AKP framed as an illustration of their "democratic responsiveness to the demands of conservative masses" were coupled with a unilateralist, imposing, moralistic, combative style that denigrated, if not interfered with secular lifestyles. For example, Erdoğan's call for women to have at least three children may have resonated with his base, but it raised alarms among those who wished the state not to intervene in private life.[430] A remark by the then deputy Prime Minister Bülent Arınç that virtuous women should refrain from laughing in public, for example, drew

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[428] After containing the military and taking over the Presidency, a package of Constitutional amendments rendering the last bastion of the establishment, the judiciary, a more heterogeneous and friendly institution were accepted by popular vote in a referendum in 2010.

[429] Dani Rodrik, "A Sledgehammer Blow to Turkish Democracy," *Financial Times*, March 3, 2011. For a detailed discussion of the deeply problematic nature of the proceedings, see Dani Rodrik, "The Plot against the Generals," June 2014; and Dani Rodrik and Pınar Doğan, *Balyoz Bir Darbe Kurgusunun Belgeleri Ve Gerçekler* (İstanbul: Destek Yayınevi, 2010). See also Gareth Jenkins, "Between Fact and Fantasy: Turkey's Ergenekon Investigation," Silk Road Papers, August 2009.

[430] "Erdoğan: En Az Üç Çocuk Doğurun," *Hürriyet*, March 7, 2008.

even stronger criticism.[431] Of particular economic impact was a new ban on serving and consuming alcohol in public.

The turning point came with the Gezi Park protests in May and June 2013. The protests did not remain limited to Gezi Park itself and instead spread to cities across the country and became, according to political scientist Cihan Tuğal, the biggest spontaneous revolt in Turkish history.[432] They were a common reaction to a set of policies that had been incrementally curtailing individual freedoms and represented a no vote to Erdoğan, who, in the eyes of the protesters, had gone back on his promise to respect people's way of life, regardless of religion, ethnicity, or gender. Rather than alleviating the concerns of the protestors, the AKP brutally cracked down on protestors and employed forceful measures to prevent a possible repeat of the Gezi Park protests. The corruption probe against the four government ministers and Erdoğan's inner circle in mid-December was projected as a coup attempt by the religious network led by Fetullah Gulen in alliance with international forces conspiring against the AKP and Turkey. The government blocked the probe by compromising the rule of law and introducing greater controls over the judiciary, press and social media.[433]

In addition to the inflammatory language of Erdoğan depicting his critics as traitors, enemies of the nation, scums, thugs and drunkards, AKP opponents and critics have been harassed by arbitrary fiscal and administrative investigations and fines as well as threats of physical violence. In a politically motivated attempt to intimidate the

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[431] Işıl Arslan and Mehmet İnan, "Arınç: Kadınlar Herkesin İçerisinde Kah- kaha Atmayacak," Hürriyet, July 29, 2014.

[432] Cihan Tuğal, *Passive Revolution: Absorbing the Islamic Challenge to Capitalism*. 1 edition. Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2009.

[433] Berk Esen and Sebnem Gumuscu. "Rising Competitive Authoritarianism in Turkey." Third World Quarterly 37, no. 9 (September 1, 2016): 1581–1606.

opposition media, in 2009, the media firm Dogan Yayın, was fined $2.5 billion for tax evasion. Erdoğan publically called for a boycott of the Dogan owned media, including *Hurriyet*, Turkey's most prominent and widely circulated daily newspaper. In the end, the owner Aydin Dogan was forced to sell his company to pro-AKP businesses. These are among the many examples of an uneven playing field and democratic backsliding in Turkey, illustrating a regime type Levitsky and Way have called "competitive authoritarianism."[434]

At least since 2011, the AKP has shown complete disregard for democratic norms such as pluralism, individual rights, freedom of expression and reconstructed the narrative around Turkey as a "Muslim nation" that is supposedly freed from hundreds of years of Westernization by restoring Islamic civilizational identity.[435] Such a project necessitates cementing its hold on power in order to remake Turkish society. The AKP's resolve to monopolize power is best illustrated by its rejection of the results of the June 2015 elections, which dictated a sharing of power within the context of a coalition government. Erdoğan, President since 2014, took advantage of the turmoil in the Southeast and the escalating threat of violence by the PKK, to call another round of elections in November 2015 in order to "correct" the June 2015 election results.

The AKP has contradicted its earlier reputation as a conservative democrat, liberal Islamist or a post-Islamist party. The earlier expectations that the embrace of universal values of human rights and democracy for instrumental reasons would eventually lead to a substantive belief in these values or that the logic of electoral competition would result

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[434] Steven Levitsky and Lucan A. Way. *Competitive Authoritarianism: Hybrid Regimes after the Cold War*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 46.
[435] Halil Karaveli, "Erdoğan's Journey," *Foreign Affairs*, Nov/Dec 2016; and Soner Cagaptay and Oya Rose Aktas, "How Erdoganism Is Killing Turkish Democracy," *Foreign Affairs*, July 7, 2017.

in the emergence a substantive Muslim democracy has also proven to be misguided. [436] It turned out that the AKP's moderation was tactical and superficial. This chapter will attempt to explain this reversal by focusing on three possible factors: Erdoğan's strong leadership and the AKP's internal party structure, the political context within which the AKP interacted with secular actors, and the impact of the changing international context on the AKP's embrace of a more religious nationalist orientation.

Erdoğan's AKP: The Rise of the Strongman

It is important to note that Turkish Islamism has been less an intellectual movement of ideas than a political movement for defending the interests of conservative Muslims within Turkey's secularist power structures. It has moreover always had a strong nationalist dimension with very weak links to the Ottoman past and Islamist movements elsewhere in the Muslim world. [437] Erdoğan's formative years overlapped with the height of anti-leftist campaigns in the 1960s and 1970s when the Soviet Union and "godless communism" was seen as Turkey's biggest security threat and as a result his original political identity was that of a religiously devout Cold War warrior. In high school, he joined the leading youth organization of the Turkish right, the National Turkish Student Association (MTTB), which played a crucial role in mobilizing students from conservative and lower-middle-class backgrounds. "The only force that can destroy

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[436] Ihsan D. Dagi "Rethinking Human Rights, Democracy, and the West: Post-Islamist Intellectuals in Turkey." *Critique: Critical Middle Eastern Studies* 13, no. 2 (June 1, 2004): 135–51. See also Vali Nasr, The Rise of Islamic Capitalism: Why the New Muslim Middle Class Is the Key to Defeating Extremism. (New York: Free Press, 2010), 32.

[437] Ahmet Yıldız, "Transformation of Islamic Thought in Turkey Since the 1950s," in *The Blackwell Companion to Contemporary Islamic Thought*, eds. Ibrahim M. Abu Rabi Oxford, (UK: Blackwell Publishing) pp.39-54.

communism is Islam," was one of its slogans; "Fighting against communism is as beneficial as praying," was another.[438]

The MTTB was the ideological breeding ground for the generation of Islamist cadres that went on to found the AKP. All of the party's leading figures had belonged to the MTTB during their high school or university years, including Abdullah Gül, who served as president from 2007 to 2014, and Bülent Arinç, who was Erdoğan's deputy Prime Minister from 2009 to 2015. As a young man, Ismail Kahraman, the current Speaker of the Turkish parliament, served as the president of the MTTB. These men's worldviews had been forged in a traditionalist Turkish middle class in which political values were shaped not by a commitment to liberalism but by a combination of hard line anticommunism and religious nationalism.[439]

Nonetheless, there has been a series of evolutions in the Turkish Islamist movement from the ideological formulations of the religious National View of Erbakan, to the "conservative democracy" in the 2000's and finally to the leader based, personality cult of Erdoğan. In Turkey, nowadays, posters featuring Erdoğan appear throughout Istanbul, on highway billboards and mass transit. Wearing his usual dark suit, Erdoğan looks to be in purposeful motion, like an action hero. Two large words in block letters, Sağlam Irade, Turkish for "Iron Will," accompany him in every poster.[440] There is no doubt that Erdoğan has become one of the most polarizing figures in Turkish history and election results are divided almost evenly between his fanatic supporters and ardent

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[438] Iren Ozgur, *Islamic Schools in Modern Turkey: Faith, Politics, and Education*. (Cambridge University Press, 2012), 126.

[439] Rusen Cakir and Fehmi Calmuk, Recep Tayip Erdogan, *Bir Donusum Oykusu* [Recep Tayip Erdogan, A Story of Transformation] (Istanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2001).

[440] Carlotta Gall, "Erdogan's Victory in Turkey Election Expands His Powers." *The New York Times*, June 24, 2018.

critics. While some of his supporters appreciate this evocation of 1930's-era masculinity, for many others, it often feels like an invasion of personal space. The omnipresence of Erdoğan in every public space, the fact that he is at the center of every debate in parliament or the subject of every newspaper article and tweet goes to show how he dominates the political discourse. Moreover, his image is "managed" by an array of political pundits and state supported media organizations. In the aftermath of the 1996 crackdown, Islamists realized the importance of having their own newspaper and media organizations, and worked tirelessly to build a pro-AKP media empire with a wide array of newspapers and networks post 2002. With the support of state advertising revenue and financial resources, these news organizations have taken over many previously mainstream news outlets and now dominate the media landscape.[441]

The unquestioned loyalty of Erdoğan's followers and the aura of invincibility surrounding him speak to the personality cult that has developed around the President. Moreover, in line with the characteristics of right-wing populism described above, much of Erdoğan's rhetoric builds on the established center-periphery cleavages in Turkey and draws a sharp distinction between the elite and the people. He has successfully portrayed himself as the savior of the people, the downtrodden. For example, he defines the mission of the AKP as the "liberation of the social segments despised and excluded by people who think that they are superior."[442] He frequently argues that the AKP represents the "nation" against the "happy minorities, privileged classes and shadow power holders."[443]

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[441] Murat Somer, "Understanding Turkey's Democratic Breakdown: Old vs. New and Indigenous vs. Global Authoritarianism." *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies* 16, no. 4 (October 1, 2016): 481–503.

[442] "Kendilerini ne zannediyolar!" <Erdogan: Who do they think they are? Liberation of the victims> Bugün, Jan 12, 2012.

[443] "Milletin kendisi" <We are the true people.> Zaman, May 23, 2011.

In particular since 2011, the party has submitted to the strong charismatic leadership of Erdoğan. Rapid back-pedaling from the promises of intra-party democracy, coupled with the rise of a nationalist rhetoric has prevented the development of a clearly defined political identity. As he has accumulated power, Erdoğan has gradually silenced critical politicians surrounding him and turned the party into his organizational tool. My interviews with AKP officials also confirmed the firm control Erdoğan exercised over the party organization and how he was able to make decisions unilaterally. A journalist close to the AKP summed it up as: "nothing could happen in the AKP against the will of Erdoğan." This has seriously diminished the AKP's capacity to carry out a democratic reform agenda. This is not just because a personalistic party in itself is an impediment to democratization, but also because the strong charismatic leader that binds the AKP possesses a limited understanding of democracy and liberalism.[444]

More importantly, once given the popular mandate to rule, Erdoğan has shown that he considers the representation of political differences in his own party as well as in the media and broader interest groups as damaging to the national interest. An analysis of his public statements when confronted with opposing views shows that he complains about non-AKP voters failing to appreciate his national vision, accusing them of being unconcerned with the national interest, engaging in ideological politics and creating unnecessary conflict.[445] He takes criticisms personally, as a questioning of, and insult to his national vision and sense of justice.

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[444] Murat Somer, "Turkey: The Slippery Slope from Reformist to Revolutionary Polarization and Democratic Breakdown:" *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, December 20, 2018.

[445] See "Diger %50 niye oy vermedi anlamaya cailsiyoruz" <Why did the other 50 % not vote for me>, *Hurriyet*, June 25, 2011, "Basinizi Dik Tuttun" <Hold your head up high>, *Hurriyet*, Sept 2, 2014, "Eninde Sonunda Dokunulursunuz" <In the end, you will be harmed too>, *Hurriyet*, April 20, 2016, "O Karara Uymuyorum" <I do no abide by that decision>, *Hurriyet*, February 29, 2016.

In 2002, the AKP leadership, a team of prominent Islamist politicians as well as some respectable center-right figures pledged to promote coalition politics, intra-party democracy and a discourse emphasizing democratization. By 2003, however, the party's constitution was revised to strengthen the leadership at the expense of intra party democracy.[446] This was mainly done through the consolidation of the party leader's say in the appointment of national and provincial party executive committees and by truncating every potential accumulation of power at the local level through careful candidate selection processes. In early 2002, ordinary party members had a greater say in the formation of governing bodies at the local level and the party elite (the Central Decision and Administration Board) also had some sort of control over the formation of the Central Executive Committee – and, therefore, over the party leader. After the amendments were passed in 2003, the party leader acquired the right to select all members of the Central Executive Committee, and the headquarters took control of selecting candidates for the provincial governing bodies.

Erdoğan had apparently equated intra-party democracy with internal strife and mischief. He was convinced that the struggle against the authoritarian establishment necessitated suppressing the "untimely" and "extreme" demands of the conservative Islamist rank and file in order to present a united and coordinated front against the establishment. This was followed by the gradual departure and side-lining of heavy weight Islamist actors, and independent-minded centrist figures who represented countervailing forces to Erdoğan's dominating status in the party. [447]

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[446] Ersin Kalaycioglu, "Justice and Development Party at the Helm: Resurgence of Islam or Restitution of the Right-of-Center Predominant Party?" *Turkish Studies* 11 (March 1, 2010): 29–44.
[447] "Tayyip Neden Reis Oldu" <Why is Tayyip called Reis?> *Sabah Daily*, June 14, 2014.

One of the founding Islamist leaders Abdullatif Şener left the party over disagreement with Erdoğan on the issues of corruption and polarization in 2008. He later argued in an interview "at the beginning no one had envisaged this kind of charismatic leadership. Everybody was seeing each other as equals." Another one, Abdullah Gül was moved to the impartial, non-executive seat of the presidency in 2007 and his team was marginalized and gradually purged.[448] Erdoğan deployed the support of party members and recruited loyalists without an independent power base, as a means of imposing party discipline. In this way, he was able to dominate the party without any significant challenge to his leadership. The AKP thus became a personalistic party united around loyalty to Erdoğan. In turn, Erdoğan alone reaped the reputation for struggling against the secular establishment and assumed the position of the defender of oppressed Muslims or "mazlum" (the victims) in Turkish. Erdoğan's supporters often refer to him as "Reis" (chief)

Based on Kitschelt's framework on political parties that studies linkages between citizens and political elites, under the leadership of Erdoğan, the AKP has been reduced to a party based on discipline rather than a coherent political party, as coherence is arguably a function of a political program.[449] The unity and survival of the AKP is therefore dependent on the leader's ability and skills to impose discipline, punish and reward. This is evident in the way Erdoğan responds to criticism and disciplines his party members. For example, Erdoğan perceives any criticism of previous Turkish Prime Ministers such as Menderes and Erbakan, or even Egyptian President Morsi for that

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[448] Sultan Tepe, *Beyond Sacred and Secular: Politics of Religion in Israel and Turkey*. (Stanford University Press, 2008), 23.
[449] Herbert Kitschelt, "Linkages between Citizens and Politicians in Democratic Polities:" *Comparative Political Studies*, June 30, 2016.

matter, as justifying the military coups against them. By implication, criticizing him and his party has become tantamount to supporting a coup.

Since assuming the helm of the Turkish state, Erdoğan has not relied on clientalist distribution alone in order maintain his concentration of power and constructed charisma for this would render him vulnerable, much like other center-right political figures. In order to create a sense of mission, capture the imagination of the people and maintain electoral success, the AKP has come up with catchphrases such as the "New Turkey", a "civilizational restoration", and "2023 targets." Much like the country's founder, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, Erdoğan has acted like the leader of a nationalist movement set out to liberate the nation and rebuild the state in accordance to his vision.[450]

In his work on populism, Jan Werner Mueller discusses how populists construct the "other" as part of their populist discourse to unite and rally the "real" citizens behind the leader. In particular following the Gezi protests, Erdoğan has resorted to this kind populist discourse, constructing a fictitious enemy of the opposition, namely the secular elite and their supporters. He often refers to this group as "unqualified and unwilling to serve the people", "evil forces" and "aliens and traitors who have nothing to give to this country."[451] It was by building this enemy front that Erdoğan, as the patron of Muslims, suppressed internal criticism, built charisma and maintained the AKP's unity.

To render his polarizing rule effective, Erdoğan followed two strategies. First, he engineered the liquidation of actors that could potentially undermine his polarizing machinations. The merger with, or more accurately, takeover of, the critical yet Islamist HAS party and the recruitment of its leader Numan Kurtulmus as well as some

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[450] Mustafa Akyol, "Turkey's Revolution Continues", *New York Times*, Jun 28, 2018.
[451] Jan-Werner Müller, *What Is Populism*? (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), 41.

potentially promising careerist center right figures like Suleyman Soylu to the high echelons of the party are examples of this strategy.[452] Second, by centralizing and concentrating power in his hands, he increased the cost of resistance to his orders. This added some muscle to his infamous warning: "those who are neutral will be disposed of" and facilitated the emergence of a loyal network of civil society organizations, foundations, think tanks, media outlets and business conglomerates, all acting as his auxiliaries rather than autonomous bodies.[453]

Rare instances of failure to toe the party line, even if they were in a friendly manner and from within the ranks of loyalist organizations, were subject to a harsh response by Erdoğan and his stalwarts in the form of termination of employment and being ostracized. Dedicated to the task of rendering Erdoğan immune to criticism and shifting the burden of responsibility for various governmental failures to others, pro-AKP media organizations and their personnel dominated the public sphere. For example, Ali Akel of the pro-AKP daily Yeni Safak was immediately fired when he called on the AKP to account for the bombing of Turkey's Kurds by fighter jets on the Turkish border.[454]

On August 28, Erdoğan was elected Turkey's President in the first ever, popular election to that post in 2014, gaining a simple majority of 52 percent of the nationwide votes in the first round. Although under the Turkish Constitution the seat of the Presidency is non-partisan and merely a ceremonial figure, Erdoğan could not be content with such an arrangement. Even as President he maintained his discipline over the AKP by not allowing for any political vacuum that could be filled by other key political actors.

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[452] Berk Esen and Sebnem Gumuscu. "Rising Competitive Authoritarianism in Turkey." *Third World Quarterly* 37, no. 9 (September 1, 2016): 1581–1606.
[453] "Atilmasi gerek adimlari biz atariz", <We will take the necessary steps>, Sabah, September 29, 2012.
[454] Berkay Mandıracı, "Turkey's PKK Conflict: That Death Toll," International Crisis Group, July 20, 2016.

For example, he prevented Davutoğlu from developing an independent basis of power and legitimacy in the AKP leadership. Meanwhile, the AKP's extraordinary Congress convened to elect a new leader that left former President Abdullah Gül out of the frame.[455]

As newly elected President, Erdoğan also reorganized the General Secretariat of the Presidency into a shadow cabinet to enhance his supervising and steering capacities ranging from foreign policy to internal security to energy. He created a new platform to communicate to the broader public by organizing meetings in his presidential palace.[456] After assuming the Presidency, Erdoğan was quick to show that he was the ultimate decision-maker by imposing some policy initiatives and blocking others, and doing so in public to undermine his Prime Minister, Ahmed Davutoğlu. As the AKP became the organizational tool of a charismatic right-wing populist leader, its capacity to develop a political identity independent of Erdoğan diminished. Perhaps the AKP could have remained a democratic political force even after the loss of EU's anchor, if it had kept the original promise of intra-party democracy.

The Political Context of the Interaction between Secular Actors and the AKP

The second factor that accounts for the AKP's resort to authoritarian and nationalist measures is undoubtedly the political context within which the AKP interacted with secular actors.[457] Despite winning overwhelming parliamentary majorities in Turkey's elections, the AKP initially faced a secular opposition that rejected its legitimacy and

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[455] Taha Akyol, "Devleti ele geçirmek," <Erdogan takes over the State> *Milliyet*, July 13, 2017.
[456] Kadri Gürsel, "Erdoğan's $350M Presidential Palace," Al-Monitor, September 17, 2014.
[457] Here I was influenced by the work of Berna Turam, which focuses on the interaction between Islamic actors and the State.

relied on the power and prestige of the Republic's secular bastions, the military establishment and the judiciary, to contain the AKP government and its conservative Islamic constituencies. The AKP's interaction with the secular opposition strengthened its distrust of secular actors and increased the importance of holding onto power.[458] The case to close down the AKP by the Constitutional Court, the resistance the party faced in its attempt to lift the ban on the headscarf in university campuses, the alleged Ergenekon coup did not contribute towards democratic power sharing but revived deep-seated distrust. The distrust of secular actors facilitated the perpetuation of insecurity, which then informed a political strategy intent on conquering the state.

To overcome this insecurity, the AKP concentrated political power in its hands, and in doing so compromised democratic norms and subverted institutional processes. Ironically, the party continued to use right-wing populist anti-establishment discourses and policies even after the disestablishment of the establishment.[459] The political context in Turkey, borrowing Dankwart Rustow's term, did not habituate or compel the AKP to the norms of democracy. Arguably, the roots of the problem lie in the ideological and institutional foundations of the Turkish state discussed in chapter two. As the authoritarian and populist character of the Erdoğan regime became more pronounced during the tenure of the third AKP government (2011-2015) it became clear that this represented not a departure from but a continuation of the Kemalist tradition of authoritarian state power. In many ways, the AKP has simply taken over the institutional

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[458] William M. Hale and Ergun Ozbudun, *Islamism, Democracy and Liberalism in Turkey : The Case of the AKP*. (London ; New York: Routledge, 2010), 23.
[459] Menderes Çınar, "From Moderation to De-Moderation: Democratic Backsliding of the AKP in Turkey," in eds. J.L. Esposito, *The Politics of Islamism*, 127–57, 2018.

apparatus of the Kemalist state in its struggle for power and hegemony over the secularists.[460]

The Republican People's Party's secularist critique of the AKP also provided the party elite with the upper hand in presenting the AKP as the only party capable of protecting the conservative-religious sectors of society against the assaults of the secularist establishment. Therefore, by reframing and presenting secularist critiques as a threat to the religious, conservative sectors of society and their way of life, the AKP elite reminded its electorate that its survival in power was vital for the interests and survival of Islamic identity in the cultural, intellectual and economic realms. This defined the character of "survival politics" as a primary component of the AKP's political strategy.

Finally, two external factors have facilitated the AKP's use of "our civilization" to reject the universally binding norms of Western democracy and revert to authoritarianism. The first relates to the loss of the EU anchor despite the start of accession negotiations in 2005. Resistance to Turkey's full membership from within the EU gained momentum and hardened, in particular following the statements by the leaders of France and Germany in 2007.[461] The rebuff by EU countries confirmed the perception held by many Erdoğan supporters that Europe was never sincere in its efforts to begin with and pushed the AKP towards the "our civilization" stance.

From 2012, Erdoğan began invoking, what I refer to as the "our civilization" discourse as a means of rejecting Western democracy as a reference point. "The core of democracy is cohabitation of differences and it is rooted in Islamic civilization," he

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[460] Metin Heper, Ahmet Evin, and Deutsches Orient-Institut. *State, Democracy, and the Military : Turkey in the 1980s*. Berlin ; New York: Wde Gruyter, 1988)
[461] Ali Resul Usul. *Democracy in Turkey : The Impact of EU Political Conditionality*. (Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon England ; New York: Routledge, 2011), 129.

stated.[462] This was followed by the claim that when it comes to matters of democracy, "we do not need to look elsewhere for contemporary universal values and principles were strongly defended and practiced by the Ottoman and Seldjuki states."[463] Such statements were also coupled with the explicit rejection of liberal democratic principles like separation of powers and the delegitmization of all critics as eurocentric, islamophobic, and non-national, and rejection of all Western criticisms as colonialist or orientalist. As part of its political strategy, the AKP used the "our civilization" discourse to free itself from democratic norms and Western interference while at the same time dismissing those who failed to abide by Erdoğan's every decision. In another example, Erdoğan declared the Constitution Court "non-national" for its rulings, which upheld freedom of expression in certain cases against journalists who were critical of the government.[464]

The Gülenist Coup Attempt and its Aftermath

On the night of June 15, 2016, Turkey experienced a coup attempt led by the followers of Fetullah Gülen, a religious cleric in self-imposed exile in the U.S. The attempt was aborted because all the political parties, including the Republican People's Party and the Kurdish opposition parties stood up for the elected government despite their differences as well as the people, who for the first time in Turkish political history took to the streets against the coup.[465] When the AKP came to power in 2002, Erdoğan and the party leaders mobilized the Gülen followers in the bureaucracy for their power struggle against the

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[462] Ziya Öniş and Şehnaz Yılmaz, "Between Europeanization and Euro- Asianism: Foreign Policy Activism in Turkey during the AKP Era," *Turkish Studies* 10, no. 1 (March 2009), 7–24, 13.

[463] "Başbakan Erdoğan'ın AK Parti 4. Olağan Büyük Kongresi konuşmasının tam metni," <Erdogan's full speech from the Part Congress> September 30, 2012.

[464] "İşte AK Parti'nin 63 maddelik 2023 hedefleri," <AKP's 2023 goals> *T24*, September 20, 2012, (http://t24.com.tr/haber/iste-ak-partinin-63-maddelik-2023-hede eri,214191).

[465] Aslı Aydıntaşbaş, "The Good, the Bad and the Gülenists: The Role of the Gülen Movement in Turkey's Coup Attempt," European Council on Foreign Relations, September 2016, 4–6.

military establishment. In return, Erdoğan, in his own words, "gave them whatever they asked for."[466]

This unspoken alliance also enabled the Gülen community to further expand their economic enterprises from banking to media to education, infiltrate further into bureaucracy, especially the military and the judiciary, two strongholds of the Gülenists as evidenced by the Ergenekon investigations and the coup plot. In an interview with the author, journalist Deniz Zeyrek recounted from his own interview with Hakan Fidan, the former chief of Turkey's Intelligence Agency MIT, who said:

"When we came to power in 2002, we couldn't find any qualified bureaucrats who were willing to work with the AKP in the ranks of the state institutions, so we relied on the Gülenist networks to fill that void. The Gülenists were well educated and had years of experience working for center right governments and were therefore well positioned to fill in these positions."[467]

This was a win-win situation for both parties and laid the basis for the alliance between the AKP and the Gülenists. Erdoğan stopped turning a blind eye to the activities of the Gülen community only when the latter openly challenged his power by bringing a corruption probe against four AKP ministers and Erdoğan's inner circle in December 2013. Since then, the Gülen community has been denounced for harboring a "parallel state structure" and declared a Fetullah Terrorist Organization (FETO). Following the coup attempt, anyone related or even remotely connected to the Gülen community has become a target for the state authorities.[468]

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[466] Sedat Ergin, a columnist and former editor of the Turkish daily *Hürriyet*, is publishing a serial on the coup attempt based on indictments and court proceedings starting with "15 Temmuz ve Akıncı Üssü (1): Bir hava üssünde olağan şüpheliler" (*Hürriyet*, July 11, 2017).
[467] Author's interview with Deniz Zeyrek, chief Ankara correspondent of the Turkish Daily *Hurriyet*, Ankara, July 20, 2019
[468] Mustafa Akyol, "Who Was behind the Coup Attempt in Turkey?," *New York Times*, July 22, 2016.

The state of emergency, declared on June 20, initially for 3 months but repeatedly extended, enabled the AKP government to bypass parliament and conduct massive purges against the bureaucracy, the military and academia. During this period, anyone connected or related to the Gülen community regardless of involvement in the coup attempt, including secular critics and other opponents of the AKP was expelled from public service. Amnesty International reported in late May 2017 that the total number of purges from public service exceeded 100,000.[469] This included five thousand academics, around 350 of whom were leftist members of the Academics for Peace group who signed a petition calling on the government to return to the peace process with the Kurds. The AKP also used emergency powers to close around 1,500 civil society organizations and 150 media outlets. The management of many Gülen affiliated companies were conveniently taken over by government appointed trustees, and their assets were confiscated because of their relationship to FETO.[470]

It was in this context of increasing government arbitrariness and growing insecurity that the AKP, together with the far-right Nationalist Action Party drafted a bill to amend the Turkish Constitution to introduce a presidential system. The bill was submitted to a referendum on April 16, 2017. Bearing in mind the suspension of the rule of law, due process and freedoms under emergency rule the bill could not be, and was not, debated freely nor was it shaped by parliamentary deliberation. Nonetheless, Erdoğan mobilized the AKP's effective party organization and state resources for a yes vote, and the bill was approved by a margin of 51.4 percent. The new system gives the

[469] Dexter Filkins, "Turkey's Thirty-Year Coup," *New Yorker*, October 17, 2016.
[470] Patrick Kingsley, "Mysteries, and a Crackdown, Persist a Year after a Failed Coup in Turkey," *New York Times*, July 13, 2017.

President broad executive powers, allowing him to issue decrees and appoint many judges and officials responsible for scrutinizing his decisions, weakening both political and judicial oversight in Turkey to an unprecedented degree. It also gives Erdoğan the option of running for a third term, which means he could technically be in power until 2023.

The BJP in Power: Religious Nationalism and the Secular State

Hindutva Politics at the State Level: History Text and Cow Vigilantism

In order to understand how Hindu nationalism has performed in the halls of power and why it has taken a more majoritarian turn, it is instructive to examine how the BJP government has wielded power in both predictable and unexpected ways. The central challenge for a BJP government of any form is balancing its Hindutva agenda with promises made to the wider electorate before elections. In this chapter, I argue that since coming to power in 2014, as the BJP has failed to deliver on sustained economic growth, more specifically on campaign promises such as increasing agricultural productivity, labor intensive investment and job creation, it has resorted to right-wing populism, advancing an agenda of Hindu majoritarianism and mounting a massive ethno-religious challenge to the secular character of the Indian state.

As the BJP continues to win elections, it is faced with two sets of competing interests that result in continuing tensions and problems of strategy. On the one hand, the BJP has to appear inclusive in order to consolidate its electoral successes and appeal to a broader set of constituencies, and, on the other hand, there is also the imperative to follow the Hindutva line in order to retain its specific Hindu character and deliver on the

promises it has made to its core base and the larger network of Hindu associations. As I

detailed in the previous chapter, in order to overcome this challenge the BJP has adopted

a very hierarchical, disciplined party organization with strict supervision and control over

its dedicated cadre of activists and rank and file. It is also for this reason that the politics

of Hindu nationalism is playing out mostly significantly at the sub-national level, where

state and local governments have introduced a number of extraordinary initiatives meant

to solidify Hindu dominance. States in which the BJP has passed laws hostile to religious

minorities, for example, include Maharashtra, whose capital Mumbai has long been a

model of cosmopolitanism. The BJP won control of the state in 2014 after allying with

Shiv Sena, a right-wing regional Hindu-nationalist party. The resulting state government

quickly rescinded positive-discrimination measures meant to aid Muslims. In 2015 it

enacted legislation making the sale and possession of beef a crime punishable by a fine

and up to five years in jail. These kinds of measures, reflecting the sacredness of the cow

in Hinduism, have primarily penalized Muslims, many of whom are butchers by trade.[471]

(The BJP-run state of Haryana also passed a "beef ban" in 2015). In addition, the cow

protection movement has pursued extrajudicial methods of enforcing its will, leading to a

spike in vigilante justice, lynchings, and mob violence. [472]

Another example from Maharashtra includes the passage of a new law making

religious conversion extremely difficult. Hindu nationalists have become alarmed by the

finding of the 2011 national census that the Hindu share of the population has fallen

below 80 percent for the first time since 1947. Maharashtra's law was modeled on anti-

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[471] Christophe Jaffrelot, "India's Democracy at 70: Toward a Hindu State," Journal of Democracy 28, (no.3): July 2017.

[472] Milan Vaishnav, "The BJP in Power: Indian Democracy and Religious Nationalism." Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, April 4, 2019. Accessed March 15, 2020.

conversion statutes already in force in Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh. The aim in each case is to thwart the activities of Christian missionaries and to a lesser extent the movement by certain groups (tribes or lower castes) to adopt Islam.[473]

The BJP has also used state ministries and educational institutions to propagate its exclusive understanding of the Indian nation. In BJP-ruled states such as Gujarat, Maharashtra and Rajasthan, the state governments have moved to rewrite history textbooks to downplay Islamic contributions to Indian history and culture.[474] Textbooks in the state of Maharashtra scrapped an entire chapter on the Mughal Empire, an Islamic regime that dominated much of the subcontinent for three centuries prior to the British Empire's formal take over. The BJP has also sought to influence academic research by appointing individuals sympathetic to the ideals of Hindutva to institutions of higher education and removing those who are opposed them. This included the replacement of a number of liberal historians and social scientists on the Indian Council of Historical Research. Drawing attention to the emphasis Hindu nationalists place on education, a former Indian Ambassador pointed out in an interview: "It is telling that in every coalition government the BJP has participated since in the 1970's they have always asked for control of the Ministry of Education."[475]

Perhaps the most visible example of this majoritarian trend at the subnational level is the selection of Yogi Adityanath as the BJP's chief minister in Uttar Pradesh after the party obtained a three-fourths majority in the state assembly in 2017. Home to more than 200 million residents, not to mention Ayodhya and the disputed Babri Masjid site,

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[473] "What Happened to India? By Shashi Tharoor - Project Syndicate." Accessed March 19, 2020.

[474] Basharat Peer, *A Question of Order: India, Turkey, and the Return of Strongmen*. (New York, NY: Columbia Global Reports, 2017), 87.

[475] Interview with Rajendra Abhyankar, Former diplomat and India's Ambassador to the EU April 9, 2020.

Uttar Pradesh is also the metaphorical heart of the Hindi heartland and a state with a well-earned reputation of making or breaking general elections. Having won the election on the back of Modi's popularity and unique standing, the BJP (with the approval of the prime minister) named Adityanath its choice for chief minister in March of 2017.[476]

Adityanath, a sitting BJP Member of Parliament, enjoys a reputation as a rebrand Hindu cleric who is the head of a large Hindu vigilante organization well known for its anti-Muslim mob campaigns. In previous years, Adityanath championed the cause of "love jihad", a conspiracy theory that alleges that bands of Muslim men seduce young Hindu women for the purposes of converting them to Islam. He is also closely linked to the controversial *ghar wapsi* (literally, homecoming) movement, which aims to convert minorities to Hinduism on the presumption that they were all originally Hindus who had been manipulated into abandoning the faith. After coming to power, Adityanath ordered the police to institute what were dubbed anti-Romeo squads, ostensibly to prevent Muslim youths from harassing women, but these vigilante groups have been employed as a kind of moral police. Since assuming office, Adityanath has also devoted his energies to renaming cities and administrative units that refer back to their Islamic heritage, whether it be Allahabad (Prayagraj) or Faizabad (Ayodhya). [477]

One of the most worrisome ethno-religious campaigns occurring under Modi's leadership has been the government's complicity with the mobs and lynching carried out by Hindu nationalists to defend the cow. Beef consumption is legal in every state, but all states except Kerala, West Bengal, and most of the far-northeastern states have laws that

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[476] Michael Safi, "Controversial Hindu Priest Chosen as Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister." *The Guardian*, March 19, 2017, sec. World news. Accessed March 17, 2020.
[477] Christophe Jaffrelot, "India's Democracy at 70: Toward a Hindu State," Journal of Democracy 28, (no.3): July 2017.

partly or fully ban the slaughter of cows. In the heated atmosphere that Hindu-nationalist rhetoric has created, militias and an umbrella movement known as Gau Raksha Dal (GRD or Cow Protection Organization) have sprung up to take the law into their own hands. What makes it worse is that in Maharashtra and Haryana, the state governments have outsourced implementation of the beef ban to these militias. For instance, the state government of Maharashtra created the post of "Honorary Animal Welfare Officer," and placed one in each district. All the publicly known applicants for these posts have been gau rakshaks (cow protectors) from various militias already in the habit of stopping "traffickers" (that is, dealers in beef whose business was legal before the laws were changed) and burning their cargos. [478]

Prime Minister Modi and BJP officials have remained silent on such instances of mob violence or lynching. Available statistics show not only a quantitative increase in the incidence of lynching after the BJP's rise to power in 2014, but also that Muslims have been the primary victims. In Haryana, where the GRD claims to have five thousand activists, gau rakshaks wielding field-hockey sticks patrol the 240 kilometers of highway between Chandigarh and Delhi, halting trucks that they believe might hold beef or live cows. These enforcers generally belong to Hindu-nationalist organizations such as the RSS and VHP. According to a local newspaper, *Caravan*, one gau rakshak told a reporter how, before the beef ban, they would burn trucks, but now they could give them to the police.[479] Ten states (all in the north and west) now have GRD branches. Other Hindu-

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[478] Christophe Jaffrelot, "The Militias of Hindutva: Communal Violence, Terrorism and Cultural Policing," in Laurent Gayer and Christophe Jaffrelot, eds., Armed Militias of South Asia: Fundamentalist, Maoists and Separatists (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 199–236.

[479] Ishan Marvel, "In the Name of the Mother: How the State Nurtures the Gau Rakshaks of Haryana," *Caravan,* 1 September 2016.

nationalist organizations have created their own groups of gau rakshaks, some of whom

have been found guilty in court for beating Muslims for transporting cows.[480]

Since coming to power the BJP has given top cover for a range of Hindutva

initiatives such as those detailed above at the state and sub-state level. More importantly,

the BJP leaders have stood by while Hindu militias have carried out attacks on Muslims

under the guise of cow protection and imposed novel types of brutal cultural policing.

Shashi Tharoor, a MP from Congress and a scholar of Indian politics writes in a column

for Project Syndicate that the BJP owes much if its success to the focus on shifting the

acceptance around cultural majoritarianism:

> "What the base of that organization does is it gives Modi an army of foot soldiers
> whose target is long-term. These are people who have a very simplistic and clear-eyed
> goal, namely, the entrenchment of cultural majoritarianism in the Indian state. And I
> think the extent of the success of those organizations—that they have managed to
> transform what used to be the default common sense of public discourse, which was a
> certain kind of embarrassment about majoritarianism—has played a significant part in
> this victory. Modi is not just a political phenomenon; he is also a large social
> movement."[481]

As part of its political strategy, the BJP has skillfully woven together nationalism

and a more aggressive form of Hindutva politics especially in the run up to the 2019

election. It is important to note that this is very different from the secular nationalism

espoused by Nehru; the kind of nationalism advocated by the BJP is based on religious

Hindu identity. As Suhas Palshikar writes in a famous article titled India's Second

Dominant Party System: "Modi's Hindutva exhorts the followers to become Hindu

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[480] Pragya Singh, "Four Stomachs to Fill," *Outlook*, 15 August 2016.

[481] Shashi Tharoor, "What Happened to India? by Shashi Tharoor." Project Syndicate, January 7, 2020.
Accessed March 17, 2020. Accessed March 29, 2020.
https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/eight-trends-that-reshaped-india-by-shashi-tharoor-2020-01.

politically." Hinudism is seen not only as a religion, but it involves a political claim. This new kind of religious nationalism has also infused also the party's economic program and its objective to build a "New India," (similar to Erdoğan's New Turkey) its landmark development schemes (which call for personal sacrifice on behalf of the nation), and the party's foreign policy ambitions. Much like Erdoğan's emphasis in reviving the greatness of the Ottoman Empire, Modi's principal contribution to Indian foreign policy has been to infuse it with the new aim of recapturing India's civilizational greatness through its bilateral and multilateral arrangements abroad. Undoubtedly, this pivot to nationalism and hyper-nationalist call to arms allows the BJP to recruit new members and further energize its base.[482]

Hindutva Politcs at the National Level: Kashmir and the New Citizenship Law

Since the 2019 election, the BJP has also used its office in New Delhi more aggressively to advance some of the long-standing core pillars of the Hindu nationalist agenda at the federal level. In one of it's most controversial moves, on August 5, 2019, Modi's government announced that it was suspending Article 370 of the constitution, which grants autonomy to Kashmir, India's only Muslim-majority state. Such autonomy was the prior condition for Kashmir joining India, instead of Pakistan, soon after partition in 1947. Moreover, the provision in Article 370 was carefully crafted to help preserve the state's religious and ethnic identity, and largely prohibits members of India's Hindu majority from settling there. With this move, the BJP ended more than half a century of careful politics. Following the suspension of the provision Modi flooded Kashmir with

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[482] Suhas Palshikar, "India's Second Dominant Party System." *Economic and Political Weekly*, June 5, 2015, 7–8.

troops to put down any kind of resistance, enforced a state lockdown and detained hundreds of prominent Muslims. This was unprecedented for two reasons: In effect, India's BJP-led Parliament ended the special status of Kashmir without even consulting the state's elected representatives. Second, Kashmir was demoted from a state to a union territory, which means that it will be ruled directly from Delhi and will not have its rights as a state of the federation.[483]

A couple of months later, the BJP government in Delhi introduced yet another ethno-nationalist policy meant to appeal to its core supporters. On December 11, 2019 the Indian Parliament passed a bill to amend the Citizenship Act of 1950 that fulfilled one of Modi's campaign promises. The new law grants automatic Indian citizenship to any Christian, Hindu, Jain, Parsee, or Sikh refugees from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, or Pakistan, except for Muslim migrants. In a historic blow to the country's founding secular principles, it discriminates on the basis of religion by singling out Muslims in offering a path to Indian citizenship. Widespread protests erupted in Delhi following this decision. The citizenship legislation follows hand in hand with a divisive citizenship test conducted in the summer of 2019 in one of India's states, Assam, and possibly soon to be expanded nationwide.[484]

All residents of the state of Assam, along the Bangladesh border, had to produce documentary proof that they or their ancestors had lived in India since 1971. Around two million of Assam's population of 33 million, a mix of Hindus and Muslims, failed to pass the test, and these people now risk being rendered stateless. In the meantime, the state

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[483] Dexter Filkins, "Blood and Soil in Narendra Modi's India." The New Yorker. Accessed March 17, 2020. https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2019/12/09/blood-and-soil-in-narendra-modis-india.
[484] Suhasini Raj and Jeffrey Gettleman. "A Mass Citizenship Check in India Leaves 2 Million People in Limbo." *The New York Times*, August 31, 2019, sec. World. Accessed May 4, 2020. https://www.nytimes.com/2019/08/31/world/asia/india-muslim-citizen-list.html.

government run by the BJP is building huge new prisons to incarcerate anyone

determined to be an illegal immigrant. Some of those who have been arrested have lived

in India for generations but were unable to produce an old property deed or birth

certificate to prove it, are not being offered the same protection as Hindus. The bill also

excludes Muslim members of religious minorities from neighboring countries, such as the

Rohingya who have been persecuted ruthlessly in neighboring Myanmar.[485] As Professor

Ashutosh Varshney, the Director of the Center of Contemporary South Asia explained to

me in an interview:

> "This is the single most important step towards establishing a Hindu state,
> arguably the ultimate goal of the BJP. Prior to Modi, belonging to the national
> community had always been based on territorial citizenship in India, determined by
> whether one is born on Indian soil. This citizenship act is designed to enforce a
> citizenship model based on jus sanguinis, by which a persons prospects of citizenship is
> defined by their religious identity."[486]

This clearly goes against the very basis of Indian secularism conceptualized by

Nehru and the architects of the Indian Constitution, which was deigned to ensure that

religion would not be the basis of citizenship and that minorities in India would not live

under subjugation.

From Developmental Populism to Hindu Majoritarianism in the 2019 Elections

In this chapter I argue that what appears to have set the 2018 state assembly elections and

the 2019 elections apart from earlier elections is BJP's pronounced move away from

development in the campaign to a more aggressive form of Hindutva politics, what I will

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[485] Jeffrey Gettleman and Suhasini Raj, "Indian Parliament Passes Divisive Citizenship Bill, Moving It Closer to Law." *The New York Times*, December 11, 2019, sec. World. Accessed March 17, 2020. https://www.nytimes.com/2019/12/11/world/asia/india-muslims-citizenship-narendra-modi.html.
[486] Interview with Professor Ashutosh Varshney, the Director of the Center of Contemporary South Asia and Professor at Brown University, April 14, 2020.

call "Moditva", in which development sits alongside a narrative of Hindu nationalism and allegiance to an all powerful leader.[487] Moditva can also be considered a form of right-wing populism outlined in the introduction. It offers a development-plus nationalism package, in the process reshaping Hindutva as a combination of material aspirations and identity concerns. Professor Ronojoy Sen, Senior Fellow at the Institute of South Asian Studies at the National University of Singapore, drew attention to this shift in an interview:

> "Modi's 2019 campaign was remarkably different from the one that he ran in 2014. That year, the main themes were economic development, good governance, and an attack on Congress and its Nehru-Gandhi dynasty. Of these, only the last survived as a major theme in 2019. Instead, Modi seamlessly and repeatedly wove together two rhetorical tropes: national security and Hindu nationalism."[488]

An analysis of Modi's speeches in March of 2019, one month prior to the election, show that defense found the most mention, significantly more than infrastructure or development. Security and terrorism also figured prominently in his campaign. This stood in stark contrast to the 2014 election campaign, when as Prime Ministerial candidate Modi had focused primarily on good governance. This shift is also evident in the 2019 election manifesto put out by the BJP on their website. The preamble to the 2019 manifesto titled: "Towards a New India" states: "In order to achieve our goals, we must first secure our country against internal and external aggression." The first item on the list is the zero-tolerance approach to terrorism and national security, in which the party lays out its priorities of strengthening the armed forces by speeding up the purchase of defense related weapons and emphasizing self reliance in the defense sector.

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[487] Arjan H. Schakel, Chanchal Kumar Sharma, and Wilfried Swenden. "India after the 2014 General Elections: BJP Dominance and the Crisis of the Third Party System," *Regional & Federal Studies* 29, no. 3 (May 27, 2019): 329–54.
[488] Interview with Dr. Ronojoy Sen, Senior Fellow at the Institute of South Asian Studies at the National University of Singapore, April 21, 2020.

This is followed by "combatting infiltration," by which the party means infiltration by illegal immigrants. The manifesto states ominously: "There has been a huge change in the cultural and linguistic identity of some areas due to illegal immigration, resulting in an adverse impact on local people's employment and livelihood."[489] The document reads like a nationalistic call to arms, almost like a warning of the majoritarian policies to come. Only after listing combatting border security and the party's commitment to annulling Article 370 with regard to Jammu and Kashmir does the party include matters relating to development such as the welfare of farmers and modernization in agriculture.

In terms of messaging, regional variations did remain on the campaign trail in 2019 to some extent: in some states of the North-East (some of which have large tribal and/or Christian populations) the BJP reiterated its development promise and pledged to use its control of the central government to that effect. However, "Moditva" played a more prominent role in the BJP's traditional strongholds. For instance, in the Gujarat elections, to consolidate Hindu votes, Modi declared that a vote for Congress would be a vote for Pakistan and that Pakistan wanted the Congress party to win. In a campaign speech in Uttar Pradesh, he drew a sharp distinction between Hindus and Muslims, arguing that the former was unjustly ignored and the latter illegitimately favored by the state government.[490] Modi also often used the term "barah sau saal ki ghulami" (twelve hundred years of slavery) in his speeches, which refers to a standard Hindu nationalist trope: that India's loss of independence began with the arrival of Muslim rulers in Sind in the eight century, not with Britain's Benghal conquest in 1757. Such statements were

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[489] 2019 BJP Election Manifesto, <bjp.org>
[490] As reported in the Hindustan Times, 20 Feburary 2017.

carefully combined with the standard rhetoric of development, opposing corruption, controlling black money and improving law and order.[491]

In Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand, the BJP did not project a Chief Ministerial candidate, but fought the elections in the name of Modi himself. This strategy speaks to how Modi has emerged as the party's trump card in mass electoral politics. By making references to Pakistan-sponsored terrorism in Kashmir (specifically, the Pulwama terror attack in February 2019) and India's surgical Balakot strikes in response, Modi sought to tap into an already heightened sense of Hindu nationalism and anti-Pakistan sentiment. In the months leading up to the 2019 election, Modi gave a series of bellicose speeches, rife with statements such as: "The blood of the people is boiling!" The Balakot air strikes also made it easy for the BJP's campaign machinery to keep nationalism salient for the voters throughout the campaign period, expanding its support beyond the core Hindu nationalist base.

Following the 2019 attack, the BJP's activists and supporters also launched a massive social-media campaign after Modi deployed thousands of troops into Kashmir, attacking Pakistan and hailing Modi as "a tiger."[492] In an interview with the author, BJP politician and former Member of the State Legislature from Delhi, Vijay Jolly admitted that the military strikes were integral to securing the 2019 election as "Modi's strong response to the terror attacks in Kashmir showed the Indian people that they were safe under the leadership of Modi who is always willing to defend our national interests."[493] This emphasis on nationalism has certainly yielded electoral dividends and played well

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[491] Prashant Jha, *How the BJP Wins: Inside India s Greatest Election Machine*. (Juggernaut, 2017), 32.
[492] Dexter Filkins, "Blood and Soil in Narendra Modi's India." The New Yorker. Accessed March 17, 2020. https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2019/12/09/blood-and-soil-in-narendra-modis-india.
[493] Interview with Dr. Vijay Jolly, Member of the National Executive Committee of the BJP and former Member of the State Legislature from Delhi April 14, 2020.

with the broader Indian electorate. It is interesting to note that Modi even deflected criticism related to his controversial demonetization initiative (in November 2016, without advance warning, 85 percent of cash notes were withdrawn from circulation), defending it as a measure aiming to counter black money and dry up funding for terrorism, tying it back to national security.

In many ways, Modi's reelection in 2019 suggested that he had uncovered a terrible secret at the heart of Indian society: by playing into a sense of heightened Hindu nationalism and deploying divisive majoritarian rhetoric, the country's leader could persuade Hindus to give him nearly unchecked power. As a former Indian diplomat put it to me in an interview, "both Congress and the BJP have pandered to religious sentiments when they needed votes." The leader of Congress, Rahul Gandhi, even visited Hindu temples to show his religious credentials. The difference, he noted, was that "such recourse was ephemeral for Congress but for the BJP it is an article of faith."[494]

There are three plausible reasons that might explain the majoritarian turn the party has taken since 2014: the fact that the BJP government was not able to deliver on economic growth and prosperity therefore it had to resort to religious nationalism which has always delivered votes in India, Modi's outsized leadership and the elimination of alternative sources of power within the party and finally the fact that the family of Hindu associations which it has relied in its bid for power demand that certain promises be kept. The BJP cannot easily give up its Hindutva agenda, on the contrary it seems like it has chosen to double down on it, because it has created expectations among its core

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[494] Interview with Dr. Rajendra Abhyankar, Former diplomat and India's Ambassador to the EU April 9, 2020.

supporters regarding Hindu nationalism, and these supporters expect the fulfillment of those claims now that the BJP is in power without the constraints of a coalition partner.

The BJP Turns into a Personalistic Party: Modi Consolidates Power

The personality cult around Modi and the evolution of the BJP to a personalistic party marks a strong departure from the norms of the Hindu nationalist movement, which in the pre-Modi era always stressed the pursuit of ideological aims and the building of organizational strength and cohesion towards that end over the role of individuals. For example, when Atal Behari Vajpayee became India's first Hindu nationalist Prime Minister in the late 1990's, he had been a nationally known political figure for 40 years. Yet, as Prime Minister, he remained a first among equals in the top echelon of the BJP leadership, consistent with the norms of the party and its broader movement.[495] Following the 2014 elections, Modi and his close confidant Ami Shah quickly moved to cement their hold over the party apparatus by marginalizing any alternative power centers.

Modi's emergence and the centralization of his authority over the party renders this iteration of the BJP, what I have referred to as a personalistic membership party in the previous chapter, quite distinct from its previous incarnation in the late 1990's. The previous party organization was led by the former Prime Minister Vajpayee and veteran lawmaker Advani, and operated under a more collegial, decentralized framework.[496] Dr. Ronojoy Sen also reiterated the point that Vajpayee was much more of an institutionalist that Modi, in the sense that he was more inclined to work with key players in his party as

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[495] Sunil Kumar, *Communalism and Secularism in Indian Politics: Study of the BJP*. (Jaipur: Rawat Publications, 2001), 54.
[496] Christophe Jaffrelot, "India's Democracy at 70: Toward a Hindu State," Journal of Democracy 28, (no.3): July 2017.

well as with the lawmakers in parliament, while at the same time respecting institutional norms. He also did not espouse the kind of virulent "anti-Congressism" or "anti-Nehruism" that has been the hallmark of Modi's brand.

In parallel with the emphasis on ideological integrity and organization building, rather than on nurturing and promoting charismatic personalities, the Hindu nationalist movement built around the RSS core, the Jana Sangh and then the BJP prior to Modi had institutionalized the practice of collective decision making by its top leaders on important matters, subject to the final veto of the RSS hierarchy.[497] The RSS hierarchy still wields profound behind the scenes influence as the ultimate guardian of the Hindu nationalist movement and its ideological agenda, but the BJP in the Modi era has moved away from the ethos of collective decision-making to deference to Modi's authority, exercised through Modi's trusted associate from Gujarat, Amit Shah, who became the BJP's national president in mid-2014 after acting as the chief strategist and manager of Modi's successful Lok Sabha campaign.[498] As Tariq Thachil, Professor and Director of the Center for the Advanced Study of India at UPenn pointed out: "I don't think we have seen this much centralized control within either the Congress or BJP since Indira Gandhi's tenure. Senior leaders within Modi's own party and even members of his cabinet are completely sidelined and reduced to figureheads."[499]

In an interview, the National Spokesperson for the BJP during the 2014 election, M.J. Akbar also conceded that: "Modi is certainly a very powerful personality and he is the only single leader whom the people trust." This statement is indicative of how Modi's

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[497] Christophe Jaffrelot, *The Hindu Nationalist Movement in India*. (Columbia University Press, 1998), 23.
[498] Christophe Jaffrelot. "The Fate of Secularism in India - The BJP in Power: Indian Democracy and Religious Nationalism." Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Accessed June 26, 2019.
[499] Interview with Tariq Thachil, Associate Professor at UPenn and Director of Center for Advanced Study of India, May 21, 2020.

popularity is deeply personal, and how he has created a relationship with voters that is not derived from party loyalty but based on what one might call high levels of interpersonal trust. More importantly, it is telling that as policymaking and decision-making are increasingly concentrated in Modi's hands and the Prime Minister's Office, alternative ideas or pressure from other actors in the policy community are likely to remain ineffective. Recent research has shown that almost all of the welfare schemes and policy initiatives under the BJP are now tied directly to the Prime Minister's Office, lending further support to the argument that Modi is intent on exercising complete control over the distribution of patronage and policymaking as well as the party organization.[500]

In interviews scholars often referred to the RSS as the ideological fountainhead of the BJP. Although the organization was initially concerned with character building, having an impact on policy and the state is now a significant RSS objective. In the 1960's, among the lower-caste recruits of the RSS was an eight-year-old boy named Narendra Modi, from Vadnagar, a town in the state of Gujarat. Modi belonged to the low-ranking Ghanchi caste, whose members traditionally sell vegetable oil. Modi's father ran a small teashop near the train station, where his young son helped. When Modi was thirteen, his parents arranged for him to marry a local girl, but they cohabited only briefly, and he did not publicly acknowledge the relationship for many years. Modi soon left the marriage entirely and dedicated himself to the RSS. As a pracharak, the group's term for its young foot soldiers, Modi started by cleaning the living quarters of senior members, but he rose quickly. In 1987, he moved to the RSS's political branch, the BJP. Given his humble origins as a *chaiwala* and subsequent rise to power, Modi told a story

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[500] Ronojoy Sen, "The 2019 Indian General Election and Its Implications – NUS Institute of South Asian Studies (ISAS)", February 27, 2020.

that resonated with and inspired millions of Indian from lower castes and provincial backgrounds. This "humble origins narrative" is also part of the appeal of populists who can claim more persuasively that they are the authentic representatives of the people.[501]

When the BJP celebrated the third anniversary of its government in mid-2017 with a three week outreach program to all of India's nearly 700 administrative districts involving senior party leaders and ministers, the mass contact campaign was titled "Modifest."[502] Just like the omnipresence of Erdoğan in every public space in Turkey, every major scheme and slogan of the Modi government carries the imprint of the Prime Minister and serves to enhance his presidential style aura in India's parliamentary democracy. In fact, as many as 18 government schemes were named (or re-named), adding the prefix "Pradhan Mantri" (Prime Minister) to the official name. These schemes range from an initiative to extend basic banking facilities to India's poor launched in 2014 to an ongoing campaign to promote digitization in all aspects of the Union government's dealings with citizens to the implementation of a 100 smart cities proposal in his winning 2014 manifesto.

This consolidation of power in the hands of the Modi is also at odds with the core mission of the RSS, an organization which emphasizes the cultivation of personal modesty, discipline and a spirit of service among its members, particularly its core cadre. Historically, the RSS viewed politics as morally corrupting, socially divisive and at odds with its goal of "uniting Hindu society" through bottom up social change. It is only

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[501] Dexter Filkins, "Blood and Soil in Narendra Modi's India." The New Yorker. Accessed March 17, 2020. https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2019/12/09/blood-and-soil-in-narendra-modis-india.
[502] "Modifest to Celebrate 3 Years of Narendra Modi Government: All You Need to Know, India.Com." Accessed March 29, 2020. https://www.india.com/news/india/modifest-to-celebrate-3-years-of-narendra-modi-government-all-you-need-to-know-2159601/.

recently that the RSS has increased its involvement in electoral politics, most prominently during the 2014 elections when the body was more explicit in using its organizational network to help the BJP attain power.

In this context, it is important to note that the BJP nominates an "Organizational Secretary", a *Sangathan Mantri,* from the *pracharaks* of the RSS, to oversee the party's organizational ties with the RSS and act as a bridge between the two organizations indicating the close collaboration between them. This incumbent is a key political link with the party's ideological mentor, the RSS, and carries out coordination at various levels. While other party office-bearers including the party president, vice-presidents, general secretaries and spokespersons have a public profile and engage with the media, the organizational secretary is largely a backroom commander dedicated to party work, who identifies organizational gaps, gives grassroots feedback and stays away from the limelight. It is rumored that the organizational secretary is answerable to the RSS and apparently not as much to the BJP chief and gets his brief from the Sangh. It is on his directions that the foot soldiers RSS carry out the assigned roles for victory of BJP candidates. The post also serves as a check to ensure that BJP leaders do not deviate from core principles of the Sangh.

The RSS and Modi: A Complicated Relationship

Modi's relationship with the Sangh Parivar defies easy characterization. On the one hand, Modi dedicated many of his formative years to the Hindu nationalist cause. Modi spent decades working up the RSS ranks before transitioning to the BJP, as senior RSS members often do, to take up partisan political organizing. While the RSS and the BJP

are legally separate entities, they share an especially close form of collaboration under the present administration. Distinguishing between the two organizations is very difficult, given the large number of senior BJP politicians, including Modi, who began their careers in the RSS or other entities linked to the Sangh Parivar. In addition, there are regularly scheduled coordination meetings in which BJP and RSS officials meet to discuss policy issues of the day.[503]

On the other hand, many other actors within the Sangh Parivar are uncomfortable with the outsize leadership of Modi. As Christophe Jaffrelot has argued, the Sangh has traditionally given priority to institutional considerations over personal equations; its collectivist ethos and beliefs are inherently at odds with a single charismatic leader placing himself over the organization. Modi's personal popularity is also threatening to the RSS, since such direct personal appeal suggests that the BJP under Modi can succeed without RSS assistance. Modi's reliance on a presidential-style public relations campaign that connects him directly to the voters can be seen as a threat to the RSS. After all, the RSS' main source of leverage against the BJP has always been that without our organizations, you cannot win elections. Moreover, Modi's ascendance within the party compelled many individuals to join the party who had no previous association with the RSS or the Sangh, a development that raises questions about the latter's enduring influence. It is also interesting to note, in particular, that the recent expansion of the RSS has been driven by an influx of members of upwardly mobile social groups who do not necessarily share the more protectionist and anti-globalization views of the RSS.

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[503] Dexter Filkins, "Blood and Soil in Narendra Modi's India." The New Yorker. Accessed March 17, 2020. https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2019/12/09/blood-and-soil-in-narendra-modis-india.

In an interview with the author, Rajendra Abhyankar, a former diplomat who served as India's Ambassador to the EU described the relationship between the RSS and the BJP over the past decades as one that has moved from resembling that of a mother and a child to that of an elder and younger brother.[504] It is also clear that the extent of the RSS's influence on the BJP's policies has varied upon the strength of the Prime Minister. According to Abhyankar, "With Vajpayee, the RSS had to compromise on the tenets for the sake of keeping political power and maintaining the coalition. With Modi, the RSS influence on government has been tamped down with Modi's strong mien. That being said, when Modi sees it politically expedient he will incorporate elements of the RSS agenda." This is evident by the fact that the RSS stridently opposed Vajpayee for its FDI embrace but the current RSS Chiefs Mohan Bhagwat's response to Modi's FDI stance has been muted. Abhyankar also added that the BJP owes much to the RSS and its organization, but when it comes to Indian society the RSS has a lower profile, and knows that building dedicated cadres is a slow and painstaking process.

Modi's outsized influence in the party and the impact his leadership has had on the 2014 and 2019 elections, sometimes referred to as the "Modi effect" is surprising and significant for a number of reasons. First, it is commonly accepted that the BJP is an ideological party and ideological parties are less likely to favor the concentration of power with one individual, especially when that individual is not the source of the party's ideology. Second, the BJP, unlike the Congress or many regional parties, is closely associated with a well-organized social group, the RSS. Political parties that are closely associated with social organizations are typically less leader-centered because the leader

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[504] Interview with Rajendra Abhyankar, Former diplomat and India's Ambassador to the EU April 9, 2020.

can be a threat to the power of the social organization.[505] Third, it has been widely held

that after Congress' one-party dominance ended, state-level politics has driven national

election results.[506] If Indian politics was indeed state centered, Modi should not have

been able to mobilize voters across the country. For these reasons, Modi's consolidation

of power within the BJP and his unparalleled ability to attract voters to the party is

somewhat counterintuitive and challenges the prevailing literature on political parties and

leadership effects, mostly derived from the experience of Western political systems.

As Modi consolidated his hold on the government, he also used his powers to

silence mainstream media outlets and critics. In 2016, his administration began moving to

crush the television news network NDTV. Since it went on the air, in 1988, the station

had been one of the liveliest and most credible news channels; in 2019, as votes were

tallied in the general election, its website received 16.5 billion hits in a single day.[507]

According to two journalists reporting on the story to the foreign press, Modi's

administration has pulled nearly all government advertising from the network, one of its

primary sources of revenue, and members of Modi's Cabinet have pressured private

companies to stop buying ads. NDTV recently laid off some four hundred employees, a

quarter of its staff. One Indian journalist I spoke to put it bluntly:

"The prevailing sense among Indians is that the media is completely bought.
There is hardly any TV channel or newspaper that may write things as they are or
criticize the government. In fact, the public was not even aware of the wider economic
problems in the country because the job reports and economic data were not published in
the media until after the 2019 election."[508]

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[505] Pradeep Chhibber, "Dynastic Parties: Organization, Finance and Impact" Party Politics 12, 5, (2013): 13-29.

[506] Yogendra Yadav and Suhas Palshikar, Principal state level contests and derivative national choices: Electoral trends in 2004–09. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 44, 6 (2009): 55–62

[507] "Modi Government Freezes Ads Placed in Three Indian Newspaper Groups." *Reuters*, June 28, 2019. https://www.reuters.com/article/us-india-media-idUSKCN1TT1RG.

[508] Interview with Rajendra Abhyankar, Former diplomat and India's Ambassador to the EU and academic at Indiana Bloom University April 9, 2020.

Modi's government has targeted enterprising editors as well. Last year, Bobby Ghosh, the editor of the Hindustan Times, one of the country's most respected newspapers, ran a series tracking violence against Muslims. It is reported that Modi met privately with the Times' owner, and the next day Ghosh was asked to leave. [509] This was not a onetime incident, but rather part of an increasingly alarming trend. In March of 2016, Outlook ran an investigation by Neha Dixit, revealing that the RSS had offered schooling to dozens of disadvantaged children in the state of Assam, and then sent them to be indoctrinated in Hindu-nationalist camps on the other side of the country. According to reporting by an investigative Indian journalist, Outlook's owners, one of India's wealthiest families, whose businesses depended on government approvals, came under pressure from Modi's administration. Not long after, Krishna Prasad, Outlook's longtime editor, resigned. This kind of pressure on media organizations is quite common under what scholars have called competitive authoritarian regimes, and in particular so under Erdoğan's AKP, which has completely silenced the independent media in Turkey through a combination of such behind the scenes pressure and trumped up tax evasion charges targeting owners of media companies.

Conclusion

The political regimes headed respectively by Narendra Modi in India since 2014 and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in Turkey since 2002 both came to power with the help of an extremely well organized party organization advancing a message of what I have called "developmental populism" using quite similar rhetoric and symbols in the process.

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[509] Dexter Filkins, "Blood and Soil in Narendra Modi's India." The New Yorker. Accessed March 17, 2020. https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2019/12/09/blood-and-soil-in-narendra-modis-india.

However, over the course of the past years in order to expand their political base and consolidate their respective grip on the Indian and Turkish state, both parties have turned to right-wing populism and pursued exclusionary majoritarian politics.

The AKP under the leadership of Erdoğan has attempted to reshape Turkish identity, not geared towards cultivating a pluralistic and democratic society but in an attempt to reconstruct Turkey as a Muslim nation in opposition to the legacy of Westernization and secularism. However, whether this "Muslim nation" project is the source or the pretext for AKP's authoritarian practices is debatable. What is clear is that the AKP has replaced its initial democratization discourse with the restoration of an allegedly authentic civilizational (Muslim) identity. In the process, its inclusionary and conciliatory policies have been overtaken by combative and divisive politics. As the AKP became an organizational tool of a charismatic populist leader, its capacity to develop a political identity independent of Erdoğan has also diminished. The context of previous interactions with the authoritarian secular establishment and rejection by the EU provided the AKP with the justification for continuing with its populist trajectory.

The BJP, too, has taken an increasingly populist and nationalist tone exemplified by the many policies the party is pursuing at the sub-national level to advance a Hindu nationalist agenda. The beef-bans, in particular have lead to a spike in vigilante justice, lynchings, and mob violence. The bands of violent gau-rakshaks (cow protectors) that have emerged across Northern India after Modi's rise to power represent the darker side of Modi's nationalism. Moreover, the suspension of Article 370 and the new citizenship law that discriminates on the basis of religion against Muslims are two of the most striking legal changes at the national level that further solidify the ascent of religious

nationalism and cultural dominance of the Hindus under the BJP. The free press, one of India's sources of pride, is increasingly coming under attack.

Just like Erdoğan's AKP, the BJP has also surprisingly evolved towards a leader-based model, a personalistic membership party. This marks a significant departure from the norms of the Hindu nationalist movement, which in the pre-Modi era always stressed the importance of ideology, organization and discipline over the cultivation of strong leaders. Since 2014, the BJP has moved away from the practice of collective decision-making as Modi has centralized power. There is no doubt that at present Modi wields absolute authority in the party, because like Erdoğan, Modi has also emerged as the party's trump card in electoral politics. There are strong parallels here between the Turkish Islamist movement's series of evolutions from the ideological formulations of the Milli Görüş in the 1970's to the Adil Düzen (Just Order under Erbakan) in the 1990's and the "conservative democracy" in the 2000's and finally a personality cult under Erdoğan.

Conclusion: The Future of Secularism in India and Turkey

A vocabulary of despair has come to dominate our world. Majoritarian politics. Right-wing populism. Militant nationalism. Strongmen. Authoritarianism. In various combinations, these words and concepts are increasingly used to describe the current moment. The moment, however, is not unique to India and Turkey, two developing democracies that have indeed succumbed to this trend, but speaks to the developments in countries around the world. The forces of right-wing populism and nationalism are indeed threatening well-established democracies in Europe such as Poland and Hungary as well as more nascent ones in Latin America, in places like Brazil and Venezuela and closer to home, yes, even in the United States. This surge is part of a larger global trend, increasing ethno-nationalism fueled by a growing dissatisfaction with the established order and the political elite that represent it.

The Turkish secular state, as established by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, no longer exists. It has been replaced in all but name by a state based on an overtly religious, Sunni majoritarian conception of national identity. What is more, Turkey is now widely viewed as having undergone a democratic breakdown. This is striking because Turkey has long been hailed as having built a rare, long-standing, developing, and "model" case of democracy in a Muslim-majority society, despite the fact that it had some serious shortcomings. At present, the state and the party revolve around the persona of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Prime Minister from 2003-2014 and President since then, and Turkey's competitive politics has been increasingly reduced in the course of this decade to a reaffirmation of Erdoğan's sultan like authority. This transformation has happened gradually over the course of decades, as political Islamists first entered the political arena

in the 1970's, tapped into the religious networks of the Nurcu and Nakshibendi orders and capitalized on the political opportunities provided to religious mobilization by the Turkish military and other state actors in the 1980's to infuse society with religion in order to counter the growing influence of communism.

Expanding on the opportunities provided by the state's instrumental use of religion following the 1980 coup, political activists inspired by the leaders of the Milli Göruş (National View Organization) mobilized financial and organizational resources and built strong and effective political organizations that were able to tap into religious associations and access the social networks that voters inhabited. These actors successfully framed their message in socio-economic terms, responding to the long-standing grievances around corruption and dissatisfaction with the established political order that seemed to serve only the secular Westernized elite. The AKP capitalized on the organizational infrastructure of the Welfare party before it and perfected the strategy of grassroots political mobilization by running a professional, highly centralized and well-equipped party organization supported by thousands of loyal party activists. Over the course of a decade, the party successfully built a tightly controlled massive membership organization with a robust local presence, features of what I refer to as a personlalistic membership party in chapter four. This organization helps explain the party's electoral success and political resilience.

Since the AKP came to power, Turkey's political landscape has been transformed in a number of ways. One of the most important changes, discussed in chapter four, has been the decisive assertion of civilian control over the military. This marks a significant break with previous eras as the military was once a very powerful actor in the political

landscape and has played a crucial role both behind the scenes and more openly by staging several military coups since the transition to competitive elections. During the AKP's second term, Erdoğan's confrontation with the military establishment escalated but unlike previous confrontations this time it went in Erdoğan's favor and the military has since then been relegated to perform only an advisory role to the civilian government.

The second change is the rise and entrenchment of a hegemonic political party for the first time since the advent of multi-party politics in Turkey after World War 2. To some extent the Democrat Party did emerge as a dominant party in the 1950's but during its decade in government (1950-1960) it faced increasingly strong competition from the CHP. By contrast, the AKP was well ahead of its closest competitor the CHP, by sixteen points even in the June 2015 election, when the AKP failed to win an outright parliamentary majority. Finally, a commanding mass leader now dominates political life in Turkey, possibly for the first time since the death of Atatürk in 1938 and certainly since the demise of Adnan Menderes, the DP Prime Minister who was deposed and later hanged by the Turkish military.

What does the entrenchment of religious nationalism in the apex of state power mean for Turkish secularism? The perennial problem with Turkish secularism has been its authoritarian implementation and the restrictive nature with which secularism was implemented discussed at length in chapter two. Embedded in the statist authoritarianism that became the defining trait of Kemalism, Turkish secularism did not have a democratic language in which to contest the rise of the anti-secular alternative. The recourse to tactics of repression such as the veiled threat by the military memorandum in 1996 or the party cloture cases in what was in retrospect the last years of Kemalist Turkey in the late

1990's was simply counterproductive. It allowed the anti-secularists or what I have referred to in this paper as the "religious nationalists" to appropriate the righteous mantle of a just struggle against tyranny. That is the unresolved problem of the Turkish secularist opposition.

During the last two decades of Kemalist Turkey, the military-led secularist establishment alternated between cooptation of the Islamist forces, for example, when the Turkish military promoted Islam as the de facto state ideology in the 1980's, and when that didn't seem to work it resorted to crude repression. This was a combination that proved to be fatal for the cause of secularism. The ultimately decisive AKP victory post-2013 in the long bitter war of attrition over the headscarf and the imamhatip schools, the two most powerful symbols of the conflict between secular and religious forces, confirmed the end of the secular state. It was a self-inflicted but inevitable wound, because Turkish secularism could not free itself from its authoritarian framework and reinvent itself.

As Michael Walzer put it so eloquently in his book *The Paradox of Liberation*, state secularism was never negotiated with traditional communities, and their worldviews were largely negated following the struggles for independence in the developing world.[510] Although Walzer was referring to the cases of Algeria, Israel and India, his insights travel seamlessly to what transpired in Turkey during the founding period. The Indian experience of state secularism, however, did differ from the Turkish case in significant ways. In India, the framers of the Constitution did attempt to build what I have referred to as reformative secularism in chapter two, a secularist ethic, a more liberal interpretation

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[510] Michael Walzer, *The Paradox of Liberation: Secular Revolutions and Religious Counterrevolutions*. Reprint edition. Yale University Press, 2016.

of secularism that seeks to express a spirit of tolerance and diversity that is both a political imperative in a multi-religious society and in keeping with an important aspect of India's historical traditions. In comparison to the top-down secularism of the Turkish state, secularism in India was more of a bottom-up process, the only way in which Muslims and Hindus could live together in such a religiously diverse society.[511]

On the other hand, the restrictive form of Turkish secularism was compounded by a disdain for its historical inheritance, the legacy of the Ottoman Empire. As Hakan Yavuz wrote in *Islamic Identity in Turkey*, the Kemalist Republic was: "based on a conscious attempt to forget the Islamic-Ottoman past."[512] The contextual void that resulted in the making of the Republic was filled by a state driven project of modernization and an insatiable desire to be accepted as a European country. The project failed to convert more that a sizable minority of Turkey's population over eight decades. That this kind of path to modernity was attempted at all was of course made possible by the fact that there was no colonial legacy or long period of occupation in Turkey, in total contrast to the Indian case.

The Indian national liberation movement, which assumed the form of a mass struggle under the leadership of Gandhi and the Indian National Congress from the early 1920's, invoked the religious traditions of tolerance and coexistence in its argument for what became the Indian secular state after independence in 1947.[513] By contrast, due to the blanket disowning of the past, the founders of the Kemalist Republic did not capitalize on the tradition of pragmatic tolerance of cultural, religious and other forms of

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[511] Rajeev Bhargava, *The Promise of India's Secular Democracy* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2010), 23.

[512] M. Hakan Yavuz, *Islamic Political Identity in Turkey* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 43.

[513] Ashutosh Varshney, ed. *India and the Politics of Developing Countries: Essays in Memory of Myron Weiner*. 1 edition. (New Delhi ; Thousand Oaks, Calif: SAGE Publications Pvt. Ltd, 2004), 43.

diversity that was the hallmark of the Ottoman Empire.[514] As a result, the deeply rooted

legacy of the Ottoman past was available to be monopolized and masterfully exploited by

Turkey's Islamist activists in the early twenty first century.

If anything, the events of the past decade has shown that the authoritarian state

legacy of the long Kemalist era proved too entrenched, and Turkey's pluralist traditions

and political culture too weak in comparison, to enable such a democratic transformation.

What took place, as I detailed in chapter five, was the replacement of restrictive

secularism by a new form of authoritarian and nationalist hegemony. Compared with the

more secular nationalism during the Atatürk's era and earlier governments, this new

nationalism is assertively Muslim, fiercely independent, distrusting of outsiders and

skeptical of other nations and global elites, which it perceives to hold Turkey back.

This nationalist and populist wave is further characterized by deep, cross-party

skepticism and distrust toward refugees, the United States, and Europe. Of course,

Turkish nationalist thought has long focused on independence from foreign influence,

and Turkish national identity has always been grounded in Islam. But religious rhetoric

and symbolism, along with an obsession with national sovereignty, have been elevated in

the present nationalist wave.[515] While this new brand of majoritarianism fuses religious

appeals with Turkish nationalism, it also bears remarkable continuities with the Kemalist

state centric, winner-takes-all view of politics and the cult of the strong man leader, with

Erdoğan replacing Atatürk. In the process, the AKP has strategically made the sense of

victimhood shared by pious Muslims at the hand of the secular state central to its mission.

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[514] Kemal H. Karpat. *Studies on Ottoman Social and Political History : Selected Articles and Essays*.
(Social, Economic, and Political Studies of the Middle East and Asia, 81. Leiden ; Boston: Brill, 2002), 43.
[515] The grip of state-centric nationalism in Turkey is visually manifested in the omnipresence of the
national flag, which is a white crescent and star on a red background. It has been widely displayed in public
buildings and spaces since the Kemalist era, but the practice has further grown under Erdogan's regime.

Over the course of the 2000's, this narrative gained the unwavering loyalty of millions of Turkish voters by including them in the new social contract and allowing them representation at all echelons of state and society.

However, once the AKP was able to capture state power and eliminate all vestiges of Kemalism, in particular the military and the high judiciary, Sunni-Muslim victimhood yielded to a "triumphalism" as intolerant of difference and dissent as the Kemalists were. As can be seen from the Erdoğan regime's police and military repression in Eastern and Southeastern Turkey in the summer of 2015 as well as their electoral alliance with the ultra-nationalists in the 2018 election, the AKP's record in power clearly demonstrates that the new hegemonic elite is just as hostile to any democratic accommodation of rights and recognition of Kurdish aspirations as their secularist precursors were. In the words of Mustafa Akyol: "Kemalism might be dead, but it's authoritarian legacy lives on."[516]

The resort to authoritarianism and the inability to channel demands for participation and recognition of identity by both secularists and religious nationalists is also party due to the weakness of political institutions in both India and Turkey. As Samuel Huntington argued in 1968, in *Political Order in Changing Societies*, political problems often arise from a disjuncture between the challenges these countries face and the strength of their political institutions. As Huntington put it, "The primary problem of politics is the lag in the development of political institutions behind social and economic change." He went on to argue that as societies grew larger, more complex, and more diverse, political stability would increasingly "become dependent upon the workings of

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[516] Mustafa Akyol, "Opinion | Turkey's Revolution Continues." *The New York Times*, June 28, 2018, sec. Opinion. Accessed March 25, 2020
https://www.nytimes.com/2018/06/28/opinion/turkey-election-erdogan-democracy.html.

political institutions" capable of responding to the new demands emanating from society.[517]

The same challenges that were easily handled in countries with strong and responsive political institutions as in much of the industrialized West, such as ensuring employment opportunities for increasingly educated citizens and providing avenues of political participation for newly mobilized social groups caused political disorder and violence in countries lacking them. Some scholars have characterized this as "democratic chaos." In both India and Turkey, the 1970's and the 1980's had mobilized larger sections of the electorate than ever before, in particular the religious and more traditional periphery, and had further spread a language of rights and a sense of entitlements vis-à-vis the state that could simply not be accommodated by the established structures of power-sharing. Given that Indian democracy has not been interrupted in the way its Turkish counterpart has by military interventions and that it does not suffer from some of its birth defects, India's democratic institutions may prove to be stronger than their Turkish counterparts, in particular the Supreme Court and the parliament, which would mean that it could better accommodate the mobilization of religious nationalists in the long-term.

The future of secularism in the Indian state is less worrisome by comparison, due to three major differences with the Turkish case. First, India is not just a country of far bigger scale, with fifteen times Turkey's population, but crucially the extent of its social diversity is unparalleled in the world. The vastness of scale and more important, the sheer complexity and degree of diversity of Indian society make the implementation of a

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[517] Samuel P. Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies*. The Henry L. Stimson Lectures Series edition. (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2006), 32.

majoritarian formula of homogeneity inherently more difficult than in Turkey. This reference to India's diversity was a recurring theme in many of the interviews I conducted with both Indian officials and academics. As M.J. Akbar put it to me so clearly in an interview: "One very important difference between Turkey and India, is that India has literally 2,5 times the number of Muslims than Turkey." He went on to emphasize that this pluralism is the most important political fact in India and that it helps the Indian polity remain multi-ethnic and multi-polar.[518] After all, the idea of India was a historical recognition that over time and not always peacefully a great diversity of religions had taken root on the Indian subcontinent. The modern Republic, envisioned by Nehru, would not belong to any one group, but to all groups in equal measure.

Second, Turkey has had a rigidly unitary and highly centralized state structure since the founding of the Republic in the 1920's. The concentration of power in a centralized bureaucracy has facilitated authoritarian rule ever since, because the elite in control of the central state institutions could impose its agenda virtually unchecked. That was how the Kemlalist cultural revolution took place. The ruling elites of Turkey have substantially lacked both vertical accountability, due to the concentration of power at the top, and horizontal accountability because of the lack of effective institutional checks and balances. With the military hierarchy's power neutralized over the past decade, the centralized state has been captured by the AKP, and the ironically it is now Erdoğan's regime that is largely free of both vertical and horizontal restraints.

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[518] Author's interview with MJ Akbar, Member of Parliament from the BJP and National Spokesperson for the BJP during the 2014 elections, Delhi, April 6, 2020.

India, by contrast, adopted a more decentralized federal structure; what scholars have called a "flexible unitary" and moderately devolved state structure in the 1950's.[519] After four decades of single party Congress dominance, this constitutional structure has de facto evolved in a federal direction following the end of the 1980's, an era in which coalitions have governed at the national level and powerful regional parties have controlled the autonomous governments of numerous States of the quasi-federalized Indian Union. That is why the BJP's hegemonic ambitions, and the fulfillment of the Hindu nationalist agenda that fundamentally drives its politics, cannot be realized simply by controlling the national government but necessitates winning and retaining power in the large majority of the 29 states.

Third, India's democratic traditions and political culture are far stronger than Turkey's. This is not merely or even principally a matter of institutional factors such as judicial independence (for instance, India's Supreme Court), or the existence of a relatively empowered upper chamber of parliament, the Rajya Sabha, indirectly elected by the State legislators. It is more fundamentally a matter of political attitudes and beliefs, of popular mentality. Scholars have written extensively about the "strong state" tradition in Turkish politics and surveys show that Turkish citizens are more comfortable then their counterparts with the "state intervening in politics to create a stable political order", possibly due to the chronic political instability and military coups that have characterized the post-1960 era.[520] In 1975, a quarter century after the 1950 Constitution came into effect, India's democracy faced its gravest direct challenge to date in the form

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[519] Sudipta Kaviraj, *The Imaginary Institution of India: Politics and Ideas*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 32.
[520] Ali Çarkoğlu and Ersin Kalaycıoğlu, Turkish Democracy Today: Elections, Protest and Stability in an Islamic Society (London: I. B. Tauris, 2007), pp. 1–56.

of Indira Gandhi's Emergency regime, under which civil liberties were suspended, leaders and activists of almost the entire spectrum of opposition parties were arrested and imprisoned and the freedom of press was drastically curtailed.[521] The Indian electorate responded by inflicting a severe defeat on the Congress party when Mrs. Gandhi misjudged the nation's mood and went for an election in early 1977.

India has been a functioning democracy for almost seventy years, where as Turkey, since the end of the single party regime in 1950, has been what political scientists have called a hybrid regime, one which holds elections but is associated with deeply embedded authoritarian practices, such as military coups.[522] The weakness of Turkey's democratic development has enabled an almost seamless transition from secular authoritarianism to religious/nationalist authoritarianism in the twenty-first century. India's democratic character has been much more robust in comparison and secularism in India has always been part of a functioning democracy and not of an authoritarian or semi-authoritarian polity as in Turkey. In an apt metaphor, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said in one of his first speeches to the Indian parliament: "The Indian Constitution is the holy book of the Indian government. And once that position is taken, which has to be taken, then the rest takes second place." The crucial question, then, is whether the aims of Hindu nationalism are compatible with India's well-established democracy.

In an uncanny twist of history, religious forces assumed the helm of the state for the first time in India at nearly the same moment as the forces of political Islam did in Turkey, in mid-1996. Although the ideas and organizations associated with Hindu

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[521] Shashi Tharoor,. "What Happened to India?" Shashi Tharoor." Project Syndicate, January 7, 2020.
[522] Berk Esen, and Sebnem Gumuscu. "Rising Competitive Authoritarianism in Turkey." *Third World Quarterly* 37, no. 9 (September 1, 2016): 1581–1606.

nationalists have roots in the early twentieth century, they were politically marginalized for much of the post-Independence period. Following independence and partition, the early Congress Party leadership subsequently campaigned against efforts to institutionalize preferential status for the majority population or to link civil status to religious identity. India's founding father, Nehru was vehemently opposed to Hindu majoritarianism and saw it as a threat to both national and democratic survival. He famously argued: "An insidious form of nationalism is the narrowness of the mind that it develops within a country, when a majority thinks itself as the entire nation and in its attempt to absorb the minority actually separates them even more."

As detailed in chapter three, this commitment to an inclusive social order faded, however, with Nehru's death in 1964, especially after the Emergency period (1975-77). During this latter era, Congress Party leaders abandoned Nehru's secular vision and sought to coopt the rhetoric and symbols of Hindu nationalism for their own political purposes.[523] Unlike Nehru, Indira Gandhi and her son, Rajiv appealed to the religious sentiments of the majority population and portrayed the Congress Party as the one true and able defender of the Hindu nation. It was this interparty competition for cultural authenticity that resulted in the communalization of the public sphere.

Although the Congress Party leadership's embrace of an exclusive religious politics was driven by electoral considerations, it also reflected a more fundamental transformation. The religious politics of the Indira and Rajiv Gandhi era, in short, was part of a new strategy to mobilize support along religious, instead of class lines. Although this majoritarian strategy worked for the Congress Party in the short term, most

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[523] Scott W. Hibbard, *Religious Politics and Secular States: Egypt, India, and the United States* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), 23.

spectacularly in the party's 1984 electoral landslide, it had severe consequences in later years. By invoking the themes of Hindu nationalism, the Congress Party leaders gave the organizations associated with this ideology a credibility that they had historically lacked. Congress thus helped to normalize what was previously seen as a sectarian and discredited ideology and paved the way for the rise of the BJP.

In the late 1990's the BJP came to power by capitalizing on the *Ramjanmabhoomi* campaign that rallied Hindu nationalists behind the goal of building a Hindu temple in the birthplace of an important Hindu god. This effort was successful in large part due to the organizational groundwork laid by the Sangh Parivar. The Ayodhya campaign was designed to emphasize Hindu unity and appeal to religious identity while downplaying caste, sect and socioeconomic differences. It was the first time since Independence that a national politician, BJP leader Lal Advani, traveled the country openly articulating a message of Hindu communalism. The very fact of the procession itself showed how much Hindu nationalism had become mainstream, at least in the states visited by Advani. The pilgrimage, militant in character, sparked violent clashes wherever it went and was covered extensively by the mass media. The procession was a spectacle, imbued with religious imagery and designed for a television audience. On the one hand, the Ram Mandir polarized Hindu-Muslim communities and reinforced the religious basis of national identity. On the other hand, it allowed the BJP to conflate the political Hindutva it was espousing with the religious sentiments of large sections of Hindu society and in turn encourage large numbers of devout Hindus to vote for it in subsequent elections.

In addition to this kind of Hindutva politics, throughout the 1990's, the BJP also made extensive use of alliances with the family of Hindu nationalist associations, such as

the RSS and VHP which had organized the Ayodhya campaign, to reach voters and appeal to various segments of society that they had previously had trouble incorporating into their electoral base. A decade later, with the help of Modi's charismatic leadership, the BJP came to power with a renewed mandate in the electoral landslide of 2014, harnessing the organizational infrastructure of the RSS and the BJP's spectacular electoral machine, which I refer to as a personalistic membership party in chapter four. The BJP under Modi is distinguished by its large membership organization, centralized command structure, as well as its strong local presence, with millions of party workers, panna pramukhs and labarthi pramuks carrying out organizational work at the local level year round.

In the 2014 campaign, the BJP stayed away from the religious militancy of the 1990's and instead focused on portraying itself as the only party capable of good governance. Just like Turkey's Erdoğan, by honing in on a message of economic development and progress, what I have called developmental populism, Modi and the BJP broadened its support much beyond the geographic and social limits of its core base of upper class Hindus in Northern India to include lower castes and the OBC's. In April 2017, Modi by his side, Amit Shah, a hardline Hindu nationalist from Gujarat who managed the successful 2014 campaign, told a top-level party conference that the BJP aimed to dominate India from "panchayat to parliament" and he would consider his mission accomplished when "every state" in India had a BJP government (panchayats are elected village level bodies).[524] This statement is telling of the aspiration of the founders of the Hindutva movement, total control of the Indian state.

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[524] "Shah Target: Panchayat to Parliament, and Every State", *Indian Express*, 16 April 2017, 1.

Religious Nationalism and "Ethnic Democracy"

There is one type of democracy, which is compatible with the ideology, and the aims of the Hindu nationalist movement. This type has been labeled as "ethnic democracy" by Sammy Smooha, an Israeli political scientist who developed the concept with primary reference to Israel. However, many of the Indian scholars I interviewed for this project also voiced concern that under Modi, India was becoming an ethnic democracy or what some referred to as a "majoritarian democracy," where not everybody enjoys the same set of rights. The State of Israel, proclaimed in 1948, lacks a formal written constitution to this day, but over several decades it has enacted a series of Basic Laws, which define the character of the state, explicitly since the 1980's, as a "Jewish and democratic state." Israel, in Smooha's words represents "an alternative non-civic form of a democratic state that is identified with and subservient to a single ethnic nation." Smooha argues that an ethnic democracy is propelled by an ideology and a movement of ethnic nationalism that declares a certain population as an ethnic nation, sharing a common descent, a common language, a common culture. He writes:

> "This ethnic nation claims ownership of a territory that it considers its exclusive homeland.. The ethnic nation, not the citizenry at large, shapes the symbols, laws and policies of the state for the benefit of the majority. The ideology makes a crucial distinction between members and non-members of the ethnic nation. Members of the ethnic nation may be divided into persons living in the homeland and persons living in the diaspora. Both are preferred to non-members who are "others", "outsiders", and less desirable persons who cannot be full members of the society and state. Such non-members are not only regarded as less desirable but are also perceived as a serious threat to the survival and integrity of the ethnic nation. The perceived threat can be some combination of biological dilution, demographic swamping, cultural downgrading, security danger, subversion and political instability."[525]

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[525] Sammy Smooha, "The Model of Ethnic Democracy: Israel as a Jewish and Democratic State." *Nations and Nationalism* 8, no. 4 (2002): 475–503.

This could as well be the description of the doctrine of Hindutva in relation it's perennial and essential "other", the Muslims of India. One of the founders of the Hindu nationalist movement, Savarkar, viewed all the Muslims of the undivided subcontinent in precisely these terms, unacceptable as members of the nation and as a threatening disloyal element whose identity and allegiance lay with the global community of the followers of Islam. After India's independence, another prominent ideologue of Hindu nationalism Golwalkar referred to all of India's Muslims as a fifth-column for Pakistan and as a danger to India's society and state. The Hindu nationalist movement has long sought to build this kind of ethnic democracy around the RSS's creed of cultural nationalism and is closer than it has ever been to realizing that goal.

It is precisely this understanding of an ethnic conception of national identity that is behind the more recent polices pursued by Modi and the BJP, detailed in chapter five. When Nehru pushed though the Citizenship Act in the mid-1950's, it emphasized the inclusive nature of national identity by extending the right of citizenship to any immigrant of Pakistan, regardless of religious affiliation. The most recent iteration of the law passed in December of 2019 under the Modi led government, denies Muslim refugees citizenship, and limits the rights of citizenship to Hindus. This is a perfect example of how the BJP attempts to redefine what it means to be "Indian," advocating for on an ethnic conception of national identity as opposed to a more civic interpretation.

Israel has all the standard elements of democracy, multiparty politics, free elections and an independent media. Moreover, the Jewish state does not practice outright disenfranchisement of its non-Jewish citizens and Arabs are represented in the Israeli legislature the Knesset. Arab majority areas of Israel were subject to military regulations

until 1966 but since the mid-1970's Israeli Arabs have campaigned assertively to improve their rights and status. But despite their efforts, the Israeli Arabs are still a structurally subordinated minority in the Jewish state, permanently relegated to a second-class citizenship status as a suspect, undesirable element through a range of mostly informal but entrenched state policies and practices. [526] Even though one might argue that Israel is a sui generis case given the historical circumstances in which it came into being, as I have argued in chapter five it seems clear that it is the goal of Modi's government to consign India's Muslim minority to a similar fate of the Israeli Arab minority while maintaining the structures of a democracy.

Israel is by no means the only example of an ethnic democracy in the contemporary world. As many Indians pointed out to me in interviews: there is an example in India's immediate neighborhood in the form of the island country of Sri Lanka located just off of India's southeastern coastline. This state, which gained independence from Great Britain in 1948, very shortly after India and Pakistan did, became a Sinhalese-Buddhist majoritarian state from the 1950's onward, even whilst retaining a democratic polity. Sinhalese make up three-fourths of Sri Lanka's population and over 90 percent of Sinhalese are Buddhists. There is a significant Tamil minority, around 15 percent. The process began in 1956 when Sinhala was declared the sole official and national language and the electoral slogan called "Sinhala Only!" became state policy. In 1972, the state enacted a new Constitution, which declared that "Sri

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[526] Asad Ghanem, "Israel's Second-Class Citizens," *Foreign Affairs* January 24, 2020.

Lanka shall give to Buddhism the foremost place and accordingly it shall be the duty of the state to protect and foster Buddhism."[527]

Other forms of official discrimination against the Sri Lankan Tamils included the state-sponsored colonization of traditional Tamil areas by Sinhalese peasants and the banning of the import of Tamil language media. A civil war erupted in 1983, when the Tamil Tigers launched an insurgency against the government to create an independent Tamil State in the north and east of the island due to the continuous discrimination against the Tamils by the Sinhalese dominated Sri Lankan government. The Sinhalese government declared victory after ending almost three decades of fighting and one of Asia's longest-running civil wars.[528]

Beyond Israel in the Middle East and Sri Lanka in South Asia, there are other examples of ethnic democracies, which enshrine the ownership, and supremacy of majority nations in the state whilst functioning as democracies. In the early 1990's Croatia, which was then still a part of the unraveling Yugoslav federation in the Balkans, adopted such a Constitution at the initiative of a right-wing nationalist party. The Constitution proclaimed:

"The Republic of Croatia is hereby established as the national state of the Croatian people, and a state of other nations and minorities who are its citizens: Serbs, Muslims, Slovens, Czechs, Slovaks, Italians, Hungarians, Jews and others, who are guaranteed equality with citizens of Croatian nationality and … ethnic rights in accordance with the norms of the United Nations."

At the time Croatia's population was 78 percent Croat and around 14 percent Serb, with the other communities making up the rest. More recently, the Prime Minister

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[527] "Parliament of Sri Lanka - Publications : Constitution (Sinhala, Tamil, English)." Accessed March 26, 2020. /en/visit-parliament/souvenir-shop/publications/constitution-details.

[528] Partha S. Ghosh, "Sinhala-Tamil Ethnic Conflict and India." *Economic and Political Weekly* 30, no. 25 (1995): 1486–88.

of Hungary Viktor Orban, has turned to Hungarian nationalism and xenophobia to consolidate his power and attack Hungary's nascent democratic institutions such as the judiciary, the constitutional court and the media. In a recent speech, Viktor Orban remarked: "We must state that we do not want to be diverse and do not want to be mixed: we do not want our own color, traditions and national culture to be mixed with those of others."[529] The Hungarian leader's statements emphasize the importance he assigns to an ethnic conception of national identity. It is clear that under Orban Hungary is moving closer to what Smooha calls an ethnic democracy.

These and other states are internationally accepted as democracies despite their digression from the Western tenets of equal rights and the centrality of civic citizenship to nationhood. To tackle this inconsistency, one can either stretch the concept of democracy or reject these states as democratic. A more appropriate strategy is to formulate a distinct but a diminished type of democracy in order to include these new forms of democracy while keeping the existing Western civic types of democracy intact.[530] It is an undeniable fact that "ethnic democracy" is a type of democracy that is spreading among consolidating democracies with a record of ethnic nationalism.

The "ethnic democracy" state prototype describes perfectly the political ideology and aspirations of the Hindu nationalist movement. That, however, would entail a fundamental change in the identity and character of the Indian state, either de facto or de jure or a combination of both. India has aspired since its independence to be a "civic"

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[529] "Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's Speech at the Annual General Meeting of the Association of Cities with County Rights – Miniszterelnok.Hu." Accessed May 20, 2020. http://www.miniszterelnok.hu/prime-minister-viktor-orbans-speech-at-the-annual-general-meeting-of-the-association-of-cities-with-county-rights/.

[530] David Collier and Steven Levitsky, "Democracy with adjectives: conceptual innovation in comparative research", World Politics 49 (1997): 430-51.

state, a polity in which all citizens and communities are equal. The "secular" nature of the Indian state is an integral and essential part of that civic identity, and it commits the state to not give either preferential or discriminatory treatment to any faiths and to treat adherents of all of India's multiplicity of faiths in the letter and the spirit of equality. The rejection of secularism, not just the really existing secular state, which may be flawed, but of the secular ethic of tolerance and co-existence (this is also missing in the Turkish experience), is the heart of the Hindu nationalist movement and the core of their political agenda.

This is also partly true because in the ideological framework of Hindutva, the "friend-enemy distinction", a concept developed in the early work of the German political theorist Carl Schmitt, manifests itself as a quest to unite all Hindus against the Muslim enemy and Hindutva cannot move beyond it. In other words, the othering of Muslims as an irreconcilable enemy of the Hindu nation is not simply a political tactic, but a core ideological belief. Moreover, the Hindu nationalist movement's version of the friend enemy distinction travels much beyond the Hindu-Muslim focus to include anyone who does not accept the Hindutva creed as the only authentic and legitimate ideology of Indian nationalism. It is noteworthy that Erdoğan also expects recognition as the only authentic and legitimate representative of Turkish Muslims and has used this type of delegitimizing discourse towards critics of his regime from within and outside Islamist circles. This stifling of dissent and intolerance of diversity of opinions has become a hallmark of the personalistic party type in both India and Turkey.

Political Islam and Hindutva 2.0

In what I have termed *Hindutva 2.0*, the contemporary incarnation of the Hindu

nationalist movement in the Modi era discussed at length in chapter four, the BJP has

demonstrated a capacity for flexibility in the pursuit of its core nationalist agenda. The

Modi government has made harnessing the forces of global capitalism central to its plan

and vision for India's economic progress. The government's flagship program "Make in

India" whose logo is a striding lion, is an open invitation to foreign capital to invest, build

plants and factories and manufacture their products in India. This attempted embrace of

global capitalism is a conspicuous departure from the traditional RSS/BJP advocacy of

Swadeshi, indigenous enterprise and the cultivation of national self-reliance, as the model

for economic policy. The BJP's manifesto's for the 1991 and 1996 general elections both

emphasized this long-established stance. As discussed in depth in chapter four, this

neoliberal turn among traditional religiously conservative movements in both India and

Turkey attests to the adaptability of their ideology in pursuit of power as well as the

eagerness for international recognition.[531] It was also the victory of the political elites

who were intent on expanding the party's appeal to the broader public over the party's

more ideologically motivated activist base, one that necessitated a particular type of party

organization in which the leadership exercised strict supervision and control over the

party's rank and file.

A similar transformation occurred among Turkey's Islamist actors. Milli Görüş

was much more skeptical of the EU and global capitalism, but the founders of the AKP,

or of *Political Islam 2.0*, "took off the Milli Görüş shirt" and embraced (at least initially)

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[531] Gautam Mehta, Hindu Nationalism and the BJP's Economic Record, *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, 2019.

the EU accession process as well as economic liberalization, which opened up the economy to greater foreign investment. In a 1972 interview Erbakan, father of the Milli Görüş had said: "Foreign investment leads to the ceding of economic sovereignty to multinational corporations."[532] He also worried that foreign investment would infuse society with culturally alien values of consumerism and that globalization would be accompanied by foreign cultural influences that would corrupt the values and morals of Turkish society. This kind of thinking and rhetoric was quickly abandoned by the new generation of AKP politicians such as Ali Babacan and Mehment Simsek, the former Finance Minister and the architect of Turkey's economic recovery post-2002, both of whom were global financial elites who were as comfortable in places such as Davos as they were in Doha.

The BJP has India's only politician with nationwide appeal, in the person of Narendra Modi. Like Erdoğan, Modi's constant diplomatic visits reflects his personal desire for recognition on the global stage as the leader of a major country, a craving amplified by the fact that he was shunned for nearly a decade by some governments, including those of the United States and the United Kingdom, after the pogrom of the Muslims in Gujarat that occurred under his watch as Chief Minister of the State in 2002. But this is also about impressing a domestic audience. He has substantially appropriated the narrative of India as a rising power and a force to be reckoned with in global geopolitics, in a way that resonates with a considerable part of urban, middle class India.

The conflation between nationalism and Hindutva has been the backbone of the BJP's new hegemony. Modi's Hindutva urges its followers to become Hindu politically.

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[532] Biçkes, Durdu. "Lider Bir Kişilik ve Sembol Bir Şahsiyet Olarak Necmettin Erbakan" <The Leadership of Necmettin Erbakan> *Journal of Turkish Studies* 12 (January 1, 2017): 51–70.

That is why the BJP has been so happy with intellectuals trying to problematize the nation. That particular intellectual initiative simultaneously places the BJP in a position of immense advantage and ensures that "anti-BJP" would necessarily be equated with the anti-national. The mixing of the ideals of nationalism and Hindutva skillfully strengthens the BJP's new hegemony because while many people may not have any emotional connection with the idea of Hindutva, nationalism is still very powerful and a majority of Indians certainly have an emotional investment in the idea of nation after struggling for years to gain independence from the British. Because the BJP succeeds in conflating these two, new recruits to Hindutva come from a cross-section of the society. This renewed emphasis on nationalism was evident from my interview with the National Secretary General of the BJP, Shri Ram Madhav, who did not mention Hindutva once but repeatedly used the word national. When I asked him what the BJP's core ideology was, he responded by saying: " The BJP's central focus as the ruling party is on national unity, national prosperity, national security and national honor. All of debates center round these themes."[533]

Prime Minister Modi avoids speaking directly on the issue of the secular state in India. However, he has senior colleagues in the Hindu nationalist movement who have spoken at length on the matter. During our interview, Shri Ram Madhav noted that the Indian secular state is based on a concept of secularism very different from the "wall of separation" (between church and state) understanding that pervades secularism in the West. As I argued in the second chapter, Indian secularism was based not on such a separation of religion and state, as in the United States in the late eighteenth century but on a principle of neutrality or equidistance between faiths and extensive, and

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[533] Author's Interview with Shri Ram Madhav, National Secretary General of the BJP, May 27, 2020.

constitutionally mandated powers of supervision and regulation of the religious domain and matters to do with religion, a characteristic it shares with the Turkish "control" model of the state. While these powers were used to reform religion and challenge discriminatory practices against lower castes in the Indian experience, in Turkey they worked to restrict any display of religiosity and banish religion from the public sphere altogether.

In the interview Madhav, a former RSS leader and *pracharak*, argued that the Indian secular state had failed to adhere to the neutrality/impartiality principle in the exercise of its supervisory and regulatory powers, and had instead practiced "pseudo-secularism." His words echo one of the major grievances amongst Hindu nationalists: "In India, secularism has been about minority appeasement. It has been anti-Hindu." As an example, Madhav, cited the appointment of IAS (Indian Administrative Service) officers, state bureaucrats, to "Hindu Religious Temple Boards or Trusts" in a supervisory and regulatory capacity whereas this was not the usual practice with the bodies of other religions.[534] This type of state supervision of religious officials, however, was also common practice in the Turkish realm, in which even imams to mosques were appointed by the state. While Madav's point is substantively correct with respect to India, what he neglects to mention was that the Indian secular state adopted such a policy from the 1950's as part of its drive against untouchability and the exclusion of Dalits from access to numerous Hindu temples and shrines across India. At the time Dalits, made up almost one sixth of all India.

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[534] Deepas Das Acevedo, "Temples, Courts, and Dynamic Equilibrium in the Indian Constitution." *The American Journal of Comparative Law* 64, no. 3 (2016): 555–82.

During the interview, Madav did not bring up this rationale, but he was clearly aware of it. He went on to say, "People despise social untouchability, but what about political and intellectual untouchability? Nehruvians are never open to engage in a debate with Hindu nationalists." This has perhaps been the cardinal sin of both Nehruvian secularists as well as Kemalist secularists. According to Madhav, the intellectual class of India, which became part and parcel of the ruling class or the political class, so to say, has been patronized by the Nehruvian establishment to spread these ideas (i.e. secularism, parliamentary democracy, socialism, non-alignment) as the core ideas or fundamental ideas of India in the field of academics, journalism and intellectual activities, even spreading to art and culture. "They have said that secularism and socialism are the only ideas to be propagated. That is why, more than the British period, there was in the Nehruvian period a deliberate attempt to cut away from our cultural roots." Unlike Congress, the BJP embraces this cultural heritage, Madhav continues: "the BJP believes that India's unity and integrity is guaranteed by its cultural and civilizational value system and hence it should be nourished well." Another BJP politician I interviewed echoed similar grievances regarding being labeled as communalist: "Our opponents always painted us with a brush. He is a communal Hindu. If I am proud to be a Hindu, how am I communal?" he asked me.[535]

In another interview, Aatish Taseer, an Indian journalist who is now in exile because of alleged ties to his estranged father who was the governor of Punjab in Pakistan, wrote:

"That ignorance of Hindu ways and beliefs was not mine alone, but symptomatic of the English-speaking elite, which, in imitation of the British colonial classes, lived in

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[535] Interview with Dr. Vijay Jolly, Member of the National Executive Committee of the BJP and former Member of the State Legislature from Delhi April 14, 2020.

isolation from the country around them. Mohandas Gandhi, at the 1916 opening of Banaras Hindu University, a project that was designed to bridge the distance between Hindu tradition and Western-style modernity, worried that India's "educated men" were becoming "foreigners in their own land," unable to speak to the "heart of the nation."[536]

As one reads these interviews, it is impossible to not be struck by the parallels with the Turkish experience, in particular by how similar the grievances of Turkish Islamists are with respect to the secular elite and establishment in Turkey. Has there indeed been a certain "secular arrogance" in both India and Turkey?[537] The unwillingness of secular elites to engage and compromise with Islamist actors and their "patronizing" secularism has been central to the mobilizing appeal and popularity of Islamist politicians in Turkey since the 1970's. Had the secularizing reforms of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and the subsequent state building project been carried out in a less top-down fashion, perhaps by engaging, cajoling and coopting traditional actors in the Anatolian periphery, by negotiating compromises with religious brotherhoods, sheikhs and village elders it could have rendered the appeal of political Islam ineffective.

Just like in Turkey, the future of Indian secularism depends on how far the BJP is able to expand its political base and consolidate its grip on the Indian state, because state power is essential for the pursuit and realization of the Hindutva movements' nationalist project. Many Indians worry that Modi's goal is to change the Constitution and declare India a Hindu Rashtra (State), a move that requires a two-third vote in a joint sitting of both houses of parliament and a majority in the upper house of the Indian assembly, one that the BJP is expected to have by the end of 2020.

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[536] Aatish Taseer, "India Is No Longer India." *The Atlantic*, April 10, 2020. Accessed May 29, 2020. https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2020/05/exile-in-the-age-of-modi/609073/.
[537] This term was first coined by Ashutosh Varshney with respect to Congress leaders.

In this sense, India, too, stands at a political crossroads. The Congress party is without a strong leadership, a mere shadow of its once hegemonic self. The classical Congress structure depended on an intricate institutional mechanism of negotiating power, resources and mandates between states and the center, distributing fiscal resources and arbitrating social conflict.[538] As detailed in chapter three, after the split of Congress in 1969, Indira Gandhi set out to consolidate her own weak position by creating a new parallel system of authority in the party based on loyalty to her personal leadership. The formal structures in the party were bypassed, internal elections were continuously postponed and stalled and inexperienced politicians were promoted simply because of their unconditional loyalty to Indira. Since then, the party's popular base and organizational apparatus have withered away across most of India, its dynastic leadership has almost no credibility and the party faces an existential crisis and the prospect of near extinction.

The regional parties, which have become important actors in India's political landscape since 1989, most of whom are ideologically opposed to Hindu nationalism, have their own constraints and problems. Each, unlike the BJP, is limited to one State. Moreover, the regional parties are a very disparate group, and the prospects of a grand anti-Hindutva alliance are hindered by the rivalry and competition between regional parties in a number of states as well as conflicts of ego and ambition between their leaders.[539] The BJP is well aware of these facts and seeks to manipulate and exploit them to its advantage. Most are undemocratically controlled by either a single individual or

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[538] Rajni Kothari, "The Congress System," *American Political Science Review* 68, no. 3 (September 1974): 1363–64.
[539] Nagindas Sanghavi and Usha Thakkar. "Regionalisation of Indian Politics." *Economic and Political Weekly* 35, no. 7 (2000): 514–18.

else by a large family. Many, especially those that recently have or currently run State governments, are steeped in corruption, a flaw that the Modi government is skillfully exploiting through criminal investigations and the judicial processes.

Moreover, the dilemmas of the Indian secular state are deeper and go back to the formative Nehru period. The BJP and the Modi's government recent highlighting of the triple-talaq issue (that Muslim men can divorce their wives by simply saying talaq three times) is the most recent example of what was described by Gary Jacobson in 2003 as "the very clever appropriation of constitutional liberalism to advance the agenda of Hindu nationalism."[540] The triple talaq serves the Hindu nationalist movement's purpose of barbarizing its Muslim other. But beyond the cynical opportunism involved in the Hindu nationalists taking up the banner of protecting Muslim women's rights, the fact is that Muslim women in India can be subjected to a form of divorce that Hindu women and women of other religious communities can not. Because of the failure of the Indian government to enact a Uniform Civil Code, this selective approach does indeed violate the secular imperative of equal, impartial treatment by the state of all citizens and communities irrespective of religious identity. In this sense, the Indian state needs to address this anomaly of Indian secularism and discredit the prime weapon of the Hindu nationalists "pseudo secularism" claim.

The future of Indian secularism will rest in part on the capacity of Indian secularists to acknowledge and address all of these real contradictions and shortcomings of India's founding principles. Simply reciting the old talking points of secular nationalism and uncritically defending the existing secular state will not suffice in the age

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[540] Gary J. Jacobsohn, *The Wheel of Law: India's Secularism in Comparative Constitutional Context*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 32.

of Hindu nationalist ascendancy. The best guarantee of secularism's survival in India lies in a characteristic, which is intrinsic to the Indian nation, its diversity. The imposition of a majoritarian discourse in such a heterogeneous society will likely not succeed in the long term. Like India, Turkey too needs a new social contract based on the realization that co-existence depends on both shared rules and recognition of differences. For the country to fulfill its potential and live up to the dreams and aspirations of its youth, there needs to be a synthesis between traditional Muslim values and the aspiration for Western modernity through a possible alliance between reformist secular elites and moderate Islamists. Instead of continuing to function as a state centric society in which majoritarianism and subservience to the strong state are prioritized, which has been the case under both Kemalist Turkey and Erdoğan's AKP, Turkey must embrace a political culture in which diversity too is becoming a fact of life. The foundation of this new contract should include secularism, the rule of law, and recognition of the multi-ethnic and multi-cultural nature of Turkey.

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