

Islamism and Secularism in Turkey: Revisiting Moderation Theory

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Abstract

This paper seeks to evaluate the inclusion-moderation hypothesis by applying it to a case study of Islamists in Turkey. Since the 1970s, Islamists in Turkey have attempted to participate in elections, but have been rebuffed by the military in the name of Kemalist laicism. This state repression, as the hypothesis predicts, has engendered behavioural and ideological moderation over time. However, the unique ability of the AKP to reconcile Islamism with secularism occurred within the context of this repression, but was not caused by it. Equating opportunity structures with institutional opening, as most of the literature does, results in a myopic understanding of the process of moderation. The explanation of the AKP's reconciliation of Islamism and secularism lies not in their political programme from *within* the state, but in their ideological innovations and political practices from *without*. The neo-liberal market reforms of the 1980s and 1990s, as well as the ideological innovation that these reforms engendered are the consequential factors for explaining the AKP's Islamist ideology and re-imagination of secularism.

1. Introduction

Scholarship on the relationship between Islam and democracy first began with a discussion on their compatibility. Now, abstract debates on whether or not the concepts of *shura* (consultation) and *ijma'* (consensus) endorsed participatory democracy have rightfully taken their place in political theory literature. The widespread participation of Islamists in popular elections, particularly after the Arab Spring, in Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco and Jordan, means that while a theoretical debate may remain, empirically, there seems to be no contradiction between self-identifying as both an Islamist and a democrat. Moderation theory is the set of explanations and hypotheses seeking to describe why moderates emerge. As a result, a distinction between 'radical' and 'moderate' Islamists has entered into the study of political Islam. This paper seeks to evaluate the merits of moderation theory's hypothesis that inclusion leads to moderation by applying it to the case of Islamists in Turkey. Turkey's Islamists can trace their roots to the 1970s, and the Justice and Development Party (AKP), has been the current ruling, Islamist government since 2002. The opening and closing of the opportunity to contest in elections – signalled by state repression and followed by ideological concession – explains well the history of Turkish Islamism. However, determining the true source of Turkey's current Islamist reconciliation with secularism, which thus consolidated their guarantee to continually participate in elections, lies in the nuances not of their political programme from *within* the state, but of their ideological innovation from *without*.

2. Inclusion and Moderation

The origins of moderation theory can be found in Robert Michels's analysis of the German Social Democrat Party in his seminal *Political Parties*. Michels was one of the first to identify the iron law of oligarchy, which puts forth the proposition that all organizations, even those committed to democratic ideals and practices, will inevitably gravitate toward being ruled by an elite few. The internal conservative tendencies of oligarchy also permeate into the behaviour of the organization. The pursuit of votes, the concern for organizational survival and resource constraints necessitate parties to abandon radical political programs in favour of pragmatic, vote-maximizing policies.¹ Michels has been the departure point for moderation theory and the findings of his case study have been liberally applied. Przeworski and Sprague detailed how the history of electoral socialism started as a "parliamentary road to socialism" but came to eschew absolute upheaval of the state and evolved into a moderate movement seeking general reform because of elite strategies and electoral dynamics.² Eduard Bernstein gave theoretical expression to this evolution in his aphorism "the final goal, no matter what it is, is nothing; the movement is everything!" For Schumpeter as well the electorate was crucial. He explains how socialist parties

¹ Robert Michels, *Political Parties: A Sociological Study of the Oligarchical Tendencies of Modern Democracy* (New York: Dover Publications, 1959), 333-41.

² Adam Sprague John D. Przeworski, *Paper Stones: A History of Electoral Socialism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 22-25.

abandoned their avowed proletarian internationalism in favour of fighting in World War I because had they taken a stand against the pervasive nationalist fervor, “the masses would have first stared at them and then they would have renounced allegiance.”³ Internal organizational and resources constraint also have the effect of making radical change simply unfeasible.

The role of the threat of state repression has also featured prominently in the literature on moderation theory. Democratic transition under military tutelage in Latin America provided the context for Kalyvas’s study on Christian democrats. Christian democrats ended up compromising their original positions, evolving from a subversive stance vis-à-vis the state toward espousing more pluralistic and populist policies. Among other variables, the specter of state repression incentivized these programmatic metamorphoses.⁴ Huntington elaborates upon this thread in his 1991 research on the ‘third wave’ of democracy. Termed the “democratic bargain”, political parties were allowed to compete for power only if they abandoned radical tactics of violence and accepted the basic institutions of the state, such as private property.⁵ He thus posits a causal relationship between inclusion and moderation. This parsimonious hypothesis suffers from a lack of accurate predictive power. If inclusion leads to moderation, then the converse – exclusion leads to radicalization – should also hold true. The moderation of Islamists in Turkey, in contrast, was precipitated by decades of exclusion. Problematic in Huntington’s thesis is the implicit assumption of a moderate-radical dichotomy, which captures neither the nuances of each of these terms, nor the behavioural and ideological diversity of the groups who are blanketed under them.

If a radical is defined as someone who eschews violence as a political tool, as Huntington and most others seem to intimate, this risks conflating groups like al-Qaeda, who seek violent revolution, with Hezbollah and Hamas, who legitimize their violence in the name of resistance, but also participate in their respective domestic electoral systems. Similarly, groups who have accepted the legal processes for obtaining power are easily homogenized under the banner ‘moderate’, although this may be far from true. Salafi groups have participated in parliamentary elections in Egypt, but their seeking of a complete societal and political upheaval questions a ‘moderate’ label.⁶ Meanwhile, Islamists in Morocco and Jordan, who are allowed to contest in parliamentary elections and do not seek such radical upheavals, have instead seen their roles circumscribed by the ruling elite to mere opposition. Turkish Islamists can be seen as one of the most evolved Islamist groups – they participate in elections, they no longer seek radical upheaval and the military establishment has accepted their tenure in rule for a decade now.

Thus, in light of the conceptual diversity which the simplistic radical-moderate dichotomy obfuscates, moderation should be seen as a process, not a label, whereby groups move along a

³ Joseph Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy*(New York: Harper, 1950), 353.

⁴ Stathis N. Kalyvas, *The Rise of Christian Democracy in Europe*(Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996).

⁵ Samuel Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*(Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), 169-70.

⁶ Jillian Schwedler, "Can Islamists Become Moderates? Rethinking the Inclusion-Moderation Hypothesis," *World Politics* 63, no. 2: 351.

gradient toward their eventual integration within the state's legal process for obtaining power and whereby the state accepts that integration. The mechanisms at play influencing this process, as identified earlier, are the threat and use of state repression, electoral dynamics, and resource constraints. These mechanisms, however, are not all equally consequential. A well-disposed and compatible opportunity structure afforded to group is a necessary condition. Opportunity structures refer to the set of enablements and constraints that structure the dynamics of social movements. Most scholarship focuses on the opening and closing of political space as the most important structural variable.⁷ Electoral dynamics and organizational constraints will invariably affect the process of moderation, but only if the party manages to ensure the continued institutional opening for itself.

Applying moderation theory and the role of opportunity structures to the case of Islamists in Turkey reveals the necessity of nuancing moderation theory, particularly the conception of opportunity structures. The case of Turkish Islamists displays the explanatory inadequacy and myopia of attributing the threat or use of state repression as the sole variable determining opportunity structures. Moderation as a function of state repression can explain the Islamist trajectory from the 1960s to the early 2000s but moderation is not merely a product of this cyclical process. It will thus also be necessary to include an analysis of how opportunity structures are affected by the relationship the state has with its society if we are to explain how the AKP reconciled its interests with the interests of the state for such a prolonged period of time.

3. The Role of State Repression in Moderation

When seeking power, the first necessary condition any political party must satisfy is the placation of fears of those in the state holding coercive powers. As Huntington rightfully identifies, this often entails the abandonment of violence and the acceptance of basic institutions such as private property.⁸ In the case of Turkey, the state demanded more if it was to be convinced. Concessions between Islamist ideology and Kemalist laicism, over the course of a few decades, were continually made. Islamists have gradually ceded ideological ground in order to find an equilibrium where the state will deem their political program as acceptable. This process is a cyclical one; the state and Islamists undergo a recurring process of repression followed by ideological concession. This explanation is useful, as will be shown, in understanding Islamist history until the early 2000s.

In the modern history of Turkey, the army has always featured a prominent role. Its close relationship with and guardianship over the state's founding Kemalist ideology remains one of its highest priorities and is integral for understanding Turkey's civil-military relations. Kemalism

⁷ Quintan Wiktorowicz, "Introduction," in *Islamic Activism: A Social Movement Theory Approach*, ed. Quintan Wiktorowicz (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), 13-14.

⁸ Huntington, *The Third Wave*, 169.

is the strong-state project of laicism and Western modernization. Its aim is to create a modern, rational state and to facilitate the growth of capitalism.⁹ As such, “the need to defend Kemalism against all threats, political or social, is instilled in the soul of Turkish officers.”¹⁰ Kemalism relied on the military to secure the hegemony of these ideals, of which Islamism was perceived as its most natural and formidable opponent. The military has also obtained a “so-called above politics position”¹¹ in politics not only through the sheer fact of wielding the monopoly of legitimate violence, but through a long historical record of opportunistically consolidating their position institutionally.

Turkey’s process of democratization, like many of those in the ‘third wave’, was characterized by military tutelage. The 1960 Turkish constitution, promulgated by a coalition of liberals and military elite, demonstrated the military’s special status as an autonomous military group.¹² Some 20 years later, the 1982 Constitution further cemented this role, as it was “designed to maintain the military as the ultimate guardian and arbiter in the political system.”¹³ Moreover, the current National Security Council has made security the *de facto* domain of the military and has also acted as the military’s institution through which it can channel its policy choices and signal its preferences.¹⁴ In characterizing different types of civil-military relations and patterns of interaction, Hale introduces the typological concept of

moderator [veto] regimes, [which] exercise veto power over governmental decisions without taking power themselves [...] though they may sometimes carry out a displacement coup in which a civilian government is overthrown and replaced by another one more acceptable to the military.¹⁵

The idea of the military as a ‘veto player’, alluded to by Hale, is not an uncommon one. Tsebelis defined a veto player as an “individual or collective actor whose agreement is necessary for the change in the status quo”¹⁶ In sum, the military has been able to remain so consequential in Turkish politics – to the extent where we can label the military as the crucial ‘veto player’ in Turkey’s moderating regime – because it holds the state’s coercive power, has its tutelary position enshrined in legal mechanisms, and has also generally enjoyed a high level of popular support due to its nationalist-Kemalist ideological underpinning. In explaining the early process

⁹ Taha Parla, "Kemalism," in *Encyclopedia of the Modern Middle East and North Africa*, ed. Philip Mattar (New York: Macmillan Reference USA, 2004).

¹⁰ Nasser Momayezi, "Civil-Military Relations in Turkey," *International Journal on World Peace* 15, no. 3 (1998): 5.

¹¹ Umit Cizre, *Secular and Islamic Politics in Turkey: The Making of the Justice and Development Party* (London: Routledge, 2008), 27.

¹² Arda Can Kumbaracıbasi, *Turkish Politics and the Rise of the Akp: Dilemmas of Institutionalization and Leadership Strategy* (London: Routledge, 2009), 64.

¹³ Momayezi, "Civil-Military Relations," 13.

¹⁴ Yaprak Gürsoy, "From Tutelary Powers and Interventions to Civilian Control," in *Turkey's Democratization Process*, ed. Carmen Lopez Rodriguez (Milton Park, Oxon: Routledge, 2014), 263.

¹⁵ William M. Hale, *Turkish Politics and the Military* (London: Routledge, 1994), 310.

¹⁶ George Tsebelis, *Veto Players: How Political Institutions Work* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 19.

of Turkish Islamist moderation, military preference was the deciding factor, and the state, the sole object of political contention.

The advent of the Turkish constitution in 1960 set the institutional stage for democratization. The political sphere became conducive for pluralism and allowed for the emergence of multiple political parties.¹⁷ Among them was the Islamist National Order Party, which espoused the Millî Görüş ideology. The movement was politically Islamic, seeking to obtain power by transforming state institutions and strengthening the economy.¹⁸ For the most part, they remained fringe movements. It, along with its successor the National Salvation Party which lasted from 1971-82, remained relatively negligible movements, reaching an electoral high of 11.8% of the popular vote in 1973. It was not until after 1983 that Islamist parties were to become perceived as a credible threat to the state's status-quo. In fact, up until 1983, certain Islamists were promoted by the military establishment in the first attempt of a Turkish-Islamist synthesis, which was albeit an unholy alliance of convenience rather than a true ideological synthesis, as a means of counterbalancing leftist and other more credibly dangerous threats.¹⁹ Formed in 1983, the Welfare Party, led by Erbakan, would go on to win symbolic mayoral victories in Istanbul and Ankara in 1994, and would also go on to win 21.3% of votes in the 1995 election, more than any other party, and thus formed a coalition government with Erbakan as Turkey's prime minister. Nevertheless, Erbakan was aware of the ever-looming specter of military repression and the constant military vigilance of Islamic activism or fundamentalism. Even though his discourse espoused anti-secularism and anti-Western values, his government made no substantive changes to foreign policy and largely confined himself to symbolic gestures toward other Islamic states such as Iran, Pakistan, Malaysia and Libya.²⁰ On other issues, Erbakan was discontented and actively confronted the military on the issue of secularism. The military establishment viewed the Imam Hatip middle schools with great suspicion. These schools for prospective prayer leaders and preachers were seen as fertile breeding ground for Islamic fundamentalism and the prospect of future political instability. Also, by promoting a religious brand of education, they directly subverted the secular system, supplanting the secular, state-centric Turkish identity and, in doing so, we effectively Islamizing Turkey's future. The National Security Council demanded that the Imam Hatip schools be shut down. Erbakan balked at such a suggestion. His refusal to implement these directives precipitated, and arguably directly contributed to, the military's soft coup against him.²¹ The Imam Hatip confrontation was not an isolated anomaly, but was indicative an Islamist inflexibility vis-à-vis secularism and an inherent irreconcilability with it. Instead of accepting plurality in religious practice, Erbakan's Welfare Party attempted to impose an archetypal version of Islam, which they ostensibly were in sole ownership of. This exclusionary world view alienated many Turkish Muslims, precluded the growth of popular

¹⁷ Cizre, *Secular and Islamic Politics in Turkey*, 29.

¹⁸ Kumbaracıbasi, *Turkish Politics and the Rise of the Akp*, 158.

¹⁹ Cizre, *Secular and Islamic Politics in Turkey*, 28.

²⁰ Frank Tachau, "An Overview of Electoral Behavior: Toward Protest or Consolidation of Democracy?," (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc, 2002), 38.

²¹ M. Hakan Yavuz, *Islamic Political Identity in Turkey*(Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 121-28.

support and most consequentially, was wholly inimical to the secularism of the establishment.²² Due to its Islamist discourse, in decision 1998/1, the Constitutional Court shut down the Welfare Party on the charge of violating the principles of secularism and democracy.

While 1998 had not been the first time Islamists in Turkey were exposed to the acridity of state repression, their disenchantment was now real. Bitterly close to, and have squandering the opportunity of, state power, something had to give way. As moderation theory would predict, organizational survival in the face of state repression engendered an ideological change. Hitherto, the practice of Islamists after having a party shut down was simply to re-establish it under a new name. This time, when the Welfare Party reorganized under the banner of the Virtue Party, they recognized that the omnipresent shadow of Kemalism required compromise. As such, the party shed its hostility to the West and its disdain of the Westernizing process which had been a key component in Turkey's Kemalist statebuilding.²³ This change, however, was insufficient to placate the establishment, and the Virtue Party was banned in 2001 for violating secularist articles of the Constitution. The process of moderation is not an inexorable shift free from resistance. The iron law of oligarchy creates a strong reactionary tide, as obstinate elites struggle to maintain both their institutional power and ideological hegemony against the reformist attitudes of their party's base. When the conservative tendencies of oligarchy create a contradiction with the ideological flexibility and reform that a competitive electoral system in a democracy renders necessary, party survival and sustainability becomes precarious matters. In the case of the Virtue Party, this contradiction resolved itself through a party rupture. After its closure, the Islamists split and formed separate parties. The modernists formed the Justice and Development Party, with Erdogan at its head, allowing them to shed the traditionalist-leaning members who instead established the Felicity Party. The AKP's modernists jettisoned the restrictive ideology of Millî Görüş, signalling a clear watershed moment in the Islamist trajectory.

As moderation is a gradual process, it does not end with token organizational structural changes, but requires a constant sending of signals and making of political concessions where necessary. In 2001, in the build up to contesting in its first election, the AKP reassured the military that they would not use religion for legislative purposes and that they would not challenge the headscarf ban, which had long been both a lynchpin issue and bane for Turkish Islamists. The AKP went as far as to shed the term "Islamism", with its pejorative connotations of anti-secularism, from its discourse and instead opted for the friendlier term "conservative democracy".²⁴ When in power, the AKP continued to make the necessary compromises its predecessors were unwilling, and ideologically unable, to make. In 2004 Minister of Justice Cemil Çiçek blocked a law that would

²² Cizre, *Secular and Islamic Politics in Turkey*, 30.

²³ Angel Rabasa, Stephen Larrabee, and National Defense Research Institute, *The Rise of Political Islam in Turkey*(Santa Monica, CA: Rand, 2008), 45.

²⁴ Cihan Tuğal, "Islam and the Retrenchment of Turkish Conservatism," in *Post-Islamism: The Changing Faces of Political Islam*, ed. Asef Bayat(New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 122.

penalize those who tried to prevent female students wearing a headscarf from entering university grounds in order to avoid confrontation with the military.²⁵ The policy positions that the AKP adopted thus must first meet the basic condition of being conducive, or at least innocuous, to party survival. The risk-averse preference of party survival over contentious issues creates a paradox of moderation whereby “the process of moderation may entail strategic decisions and a preference for certain tactics over others that stall or even impede the process of democratization.”²⁶

Simply constantly making political concessions or reacting to bouts of state repressions are not sustainable policies for party survival, because it jeopardizes the party’s popular support and undermines ideological legitimacy. Moreover, ideological moderation as a function of state repression is a very slow process. It took thirteen (1970-83) years for state repression to engender behavioural moderation, and then another fifteen (1983-1998) for repression to cause real ideological change. To explain why the AKP has consolidated their tenure in power, rather than merely just survived it, requires a broadening of scope when dealing with opportunity structures as an explanatory variable. State repression may have provided the context for the AKP’s ideological innovations, but it did was not its cause.

4. From Within the State to Without

Explanations that utilize opportunity structures but whose focus are confined to the state as the sole object of contention run the risk of providing only a partial and myopic account of moderation. The explanation of the AKP’s ability to placate the military regime lies not in their political programme from *within* the state, but in their ideological innovations and political practices from *without*. The opportune neo-liberal market reforms of the 1980s and 1990s, as well as the ideological innovation that these reforms engendered have proven to be the consequential factor in explaining the AKP’s ideological denouement.

In Turkey, alliances between divisions in state and society fall in relative congruence with one another. The secular elite of the political left has traditionally patronized the urban bourgeoisie, who benefit from the state-controlled economy. In contrast, the Islamist oppositional forces represent the petite bourgeoisie, the urban poor and rural sectors. As such, they oppose the state-centric economic policies and strict secularism.²⁷ Mutual antipathy toward the state bond provincial entrepreneurs with Islamists; the former disdain the favouritism of urban elites, the latter despise its constrictive secularism. Previously, Islamists had tried to reconcile their Islamism with secularism through attempting a synthesis of the two: during the Cold War, by

²⁵ Metin Heper, "The Justice and Development Party Government, " and the Military in Turkey," *Turkish Studies* 6, no. 2 (2005): 222.

²⁶ Güneş Murat Tezcür, *Muslim Reformers in Iran and Turkey: The Paradox of Moderation*(Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010), 19.

²⁷ Sultan Tepe, "A Pro-Islamic Party? Promises and Limits of Turkey’s Justice and Development Party," in *The Emergence of a New Turkey : Democracy and the Ak Party*, ed. M. Hakan Yavuz(Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2006), 110.

engaging in an ‘unholy alliance’ to balance communist threats; and after 1983, through the avoidance of conflict which meant conceding a myriad of issues including headscarves, constitutional reform and anti-West discourse. Erdogan jettisoned attempting yet another synthesis because a secularism and Islamism which both attempted to impose themselves on the same object (i.e. the state) would always be a zero-sum conflict and would thus always favour the holders of coercive powers when an impasse was reached. Instead, the AKP attempted to relieve the state as the sole object of contention and circumscribe secularism and Islamism to their own respective spheres. The AKP would be able to legitimize forgoing state Islamization only if they could be free to Islamize elsewhere, specifically through society. As Erdogan would eventually say, “my party is described as ‘an Islamic democrat’ or as ‘Muslim democrat’. These characterizations are not correct. This is not because we are not Muslim or democracy, but because we believe that the two needed to be considered in different contexts.”²⁸ The first step in confining these two ideological practices to different contexts would be to better define them, such that their mutual existence would not result in a contradiction.

The AKP attempted to redefine secularism in order to confine it to the state. This meant promoting a shift from ‘assertive secularism’ to ‘passive secularism’. Assertive secularism “favours a secular worldview in the public sphere and aims to confine religion to the private sphere” whereas passive secularism “implies state neutrality toward various religions and allows the public visibility of religion.”²⁹ Secularism was called upon not to limit freedom of religion, but guarantee it.³⁰ Traditional Islamism had been so critical of secularism because it assumed an assertive form in Turkey. Passive secularism was more amenable to religion and could thus coexist with an Islamic identity. However, confining religion to private, individual life may not have been appealing to Turkish Islamists. Islamism advocates for religious visibility, and not to confine it merely to the home or family. Thus, along with redefining secularism, a redefinition of Islamism and Islamic space would also be necessary.

The eventual redefinition of Islamism can find its roots in the economic restructuring of Prime Minister Özal in the 1980s and 1990s. His liberalizing economic policies supported the market and empowered small-scale merchants, small industrialists and new emerging textile industries, while undermining the state-dependent urban bourgeoisie.³¹ Society-centric Islamic movements were also strengthened. In Yavuz’s case study on the Erzurumlular neighbourhood, he found that society-centric, associational and print-based movements were predisposed to benefit from the

²⁸ Speech made by Teyyip Erodgan at the Centre for Strategic International Studies, 9 December 2002.

²⁹ Ahmet Kuru, "Reinterpretation of Secularism in Turkey: The Case of the Justice and Development Party" in *The Emergence of a New Turkey : Democracy and the Ak Party*, ed. M. Hakan Yavuz(Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2006), 137.

³⁰ Ihsan Dagi, "Post-Islamism À La Turca," in *Post-Islamism: The Changing Faces of Political Islam*, ed. Asef Bayat(New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 80-85.

³¹ M. Hakan Yavuz, "Opportunity Spaces, Identity and Islamic Meaning in Turkey," in *Islamic Activism: A Social Movement Theory Approach*, ed. Quintan Wiktorowicz(Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), 277.

liberalizing reforms, and did.³² A variety of Islamic businesses were formed and found a broad base to appeal to. Islamic fashion stores proliferated, as religiosity began to be expressed through consumer patterns. The boutique store Tekbir Giyim, meaning “Allah is Great” produces apparel conforming to the Islamic dress code, even obtaining fatwas to that effect.³³ As the appeal of political Islam grew, sales in Islamic dress did too; these two phenomena are mutually-reinforcing. The economic elite also helped fund such Islamic publications as *Turkiye Zaman*, and *Yeni Safak*.³⁴ In effect, civil society, rather than the state, was being Islamized through the modern mediums of print, television, education and fashion. While the assertive secularism of Kemalism had confined religion to individual life, economic liberalization had created a new buffer zone between the state and the private sphere. Enabling civil society expanded political society in a way that did not threaten the secular nature of the state.

The re-imagination of Islam that emerged out of this liberalization is also unique unto itself. The horizontal nature of the market place fragmented Islamic identity. Pluralities of identity were formed and a diverse cornucopia of Islamic symbols and expressions coexisted with one another through free market competition. This starkly contrasted the restrictive understanding of Islam that the Welfare Party espoused. Each individual was free to experience Islam through their own subjectivity; the bond of trust that permeated throughout the Islamic movement was bound through a common diversity. No one had a monopoly on the meaning of Islam because Islam was being understood through the free market.

The Islam of the AKP did take a particular tint, however, and can be understood through the position of MUSIAD, the Turkish religious business association commonly associated with the AKP. MUSIAD seeks to translate Islamic values into business and social policy. Instead of Islamizing economics, they merely seek to propagate Islamic business.³⁵ The realm for *jihad* (struggle) became the marketplace and historical figures such as the Prophet Muhammad were reinterpreted to legitimize their liberal free-market approach. They chose to emphasize the Prophet’s teachings in ethical business and to also promote the position of his first wife, Khadija, who was a wealthy merchant herself.³⁶

In summary, if we are to determine how the AKP managed to escape the cyclical process of repression and concession making, we must understand how Islamism and secularism were reconciled. Erdogan jettisoned an attempt to synthesize the two, and instead tried to separate the two. This separation was achieved by reinterpreting secularism into its passive variant and by promoting Islam through civil society, an opportunity made possible due to Özal’s neo-liberal reforms. In doing so, the AKP relieved the state as the sole object of political contention, and allowed this Islamism in civil society to coexist with a secular state.

³² Ibid., 278.

³³ Amberin Zaman, "Spreading Faith through Fashion," *The Washington Post*, December 2, 1999.

³⁴ Yavuz, "Opportunity Spaces," 277.

³⁵ Rabasa, Larrabee, and Institute, *The Rise*, 53.

³⁶ Yavuz, "Opportunity Spaces," 279.

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