

**AKP: AN EGALITERIAN OPPORTUNITY OR A THREAT FOR LIBERAL
DEMOCRACY IN TURKEY?**

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ABSTRACT

In this article, I discuss whether the raise of AKP is an egalitarian opportunity for democratic progression in Turkey as liberal intellectuals assume or a threat for Turkish democracy as Kemalist intellectuals consider. I will focus on the parallelism between the nationalization of religion, the dual structure of Turkish culture, the oppression of local contexts and the central rationality of Enlightenment that has induced the public use of reason in Turkey. I conclude that, Turkish liberal intellectuals' philosophical assumption that draws a parallelism between the separation of liberalism from the rationality of Enlightenment and the raise of AKP is not true. I argue that we can have two different points of views for the question up on which we can conclude two different answers.

Key words: Egalitarian opportunity, Turkish democracy, Local contexts, AKP, Kemalist, Islamization.

ÖZET

Bu makalede AKP'nin yükselişinin Türkiye'de demokrasinin ilerlemesinde, Türkiye'deki liberal entellektüellerin öngördüğü gibi egaliter bir olanak mı, yoksa Kemalist entellektüellerin düşündüğü gibi Türkiye'de demokrasi için bir tehdit mi oluşturduğunu tartışıyorum. Bu bağlamda, Türkiye'nin ikili kültürel yapısının dinin ulusallaştırılmasıyla ilişkisini, Aydınlanmanın yerel, bağlamsal farklılıkları tektipleştiren merkezi akılcılığı ile Batıda yapılan liberalizm-cemaatlerin özgürlüğü arasındaki gerilimin Türkiye ile paralellığı olup olmadığını tartışıyorum. Sonuç olarak felsefi ve politik iki açıdan iki farklı görüş öne sürebileceğimizi savunuyorum.

Anahtar sözcükler: Eşitlikçi olanak, Türk demokrasisi, yerel bağlam, AKP, Kemalist, İslamlaştırma.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The election that has ended in July 2007 with an outstanding victory of AKP brought about debates on the future of Turkish democracy. In this paper, I want to discuss, whether the rise of AKP can be seen as an egalitarian democratic movement or as the re-islamization of the only secular democracy in Middle East. There are mainly two contradicting views in Turkey on the role of AKP after July 2007. One of them is the Turkish liberal intellectuals who see AKP as a medium through which, the differences (different interests, different priorities of different place holders) of ordinary people in Turkey can come to stage and contribute to the progress of Turkish democracy. The other group of people can be called as Kemalist intellectuals who believe that the long term agenda of AKP, which has gained more support after July 2007, is the *re-Islamization* of Turkish republic and thus is a threat for liberal democracy in Turkey. I will question whether AKP is an egalitarian opportunity for local contexts and the diversity of viewpoints by means of which, the liberation of progression beyond the constraints of necessary conclusions of a rational attitude towards democratic progression as liberals assume. I will ask, whether AKP is reflecting the separation of liberalism of Enlightenment from the rationality of Enlightenment in Turkey or a threat for Turkish democracy rather than an egalitarian progress.

In order to discuss this question, I need to focus on three points. First, I will state the positivist nature of Kemalist reforms and the nationalization of religion in accordance with these reforms. Then I will underlie the dual structure of Turkish culture, the gap between the ruling elites and ordinary people that has emerged as a consequence of Kemalism. Second point will be the relation between the central rationality of Enlightenment that has induced the public use of reason, *raisonieren*, by the elites and the connection between Kemalist foundations of Turkish modernization with the rationality of Enlightenment. In order to draw attention to the parallelism between the separation of liberalism of Enlightenment from the rationality of Enlightenment in West and the role of AKP in Turkish modernization, I will notify the opposition of central rationality of Enlightenment to metaphysical-religious dogmatism with reference to Kant and the criticism of this *scientific* rationality of Enlightenment which claimed transcendence over cultural differences, local contexts and particular interests. In this respect, I will refer to Richard Rorty's challenge to the pre-bias ontological status of the cognitive structure of central rationality and

Alasdair Mc Intyre' inquiry on the privileged status of the elites' representing true public. I will argue that these critical views call for the separation of the liberalism of Enlightenment from the rationality of Enlightenment for West to provide more room for particular interests. Thirdly, I will raise the question whether we can attribute the increase of AKP as an egalitarian opportunity for Turkish democracy similar to the separation of the liberalism of Enlightenment from the rationality of Enlightenment in West.

To discuss the increase of AKP in this sense, I will lay out briefly the Kemalist foundation of Turkish democracy, its positivist authority over public life and draw the parallelism between the central rationality of Enlightenment and Kemalism. I will argue that, similar to the consequences of the central rationality of Enlightenment in West, such as the compliance of private (religious?) beliefs to public authority, Turkish liberal intellectuals assume that Kemalism gave rise to the suppression of local contexts and the diversity of viewpoints which retain Turkish democracy from progression.

I will conclude that, Turkish intellectuals' philosophical assumption that draws a parallelism between the separation of liberalism from the rationality of Enlightenment and the raise of AKP is not true. I will disagree with the philosophical assumption of Turkish liberal intellectuals that AKP could have been an egalitarian opportunity for Turkish democracy. I will underlie some statistics and point to the totalitarian attitudes of AKP and the decreasing support of liberal intellectuals particularly after July 2007. I will end up with saying that AKP seeks a totalitarian regime of religious majority rather than an egalitarian opportunity of progression in Turkish democracy.

2. ENLIGHTENMENT AND CENTRAL RATIONALITY

The subject-centered philosophy of West has caused a rational solution to the tension between private and public for the sake of a (rational) progression subsequent to Enlightenment. The main idea of Enlightenment has been: human beings *can and therefore should* think for themselves rather than with the prescriptions of some pre-established authority. The pre-established authority refers to religious thought which has dominated public sphere by means of claiming universal validity. In other words, unquestioned religious dogmatism used to bind private beliefs with ethical and political authority beyond causal inquiry and mistake subjective necessity for objective. From Kant's point of view, the foundation of Enlightenment in accordance with the *rasionieren*, reasoning as such, requires a universal standpoint beyond cultural relativity and particular perspectives, in order to bring *can* and *should* together. That is what *sapere aude*, (dare to think) means for the rationality of Enlightenment. The necessity for an Archimedean stand point for *true* decision making was grounded by *reasoning as such* which dares to challenge and replace religious authority. Kant, in order to make use of metaphysics for ethics and at the same time avoid old metaphysical dogmas which cannot be causally accounted for, wanted to distinguish the activity of reason, reasoning as such, from traditional metaphysics's "habit of accepting something as true, and hence of mistaking subjective necessity for objective". (Kant, 1977) So, he needed to find a way of applying the mathematical and geometrical certainty of reason to moral action to transcend the diversity of view points. The immature humanity, obeying a pre-established spiritual guide turns out to be a mature *menscheit* who grounds public necessity in an objective and free use of reason. Foucault says, the public use of reason points how Kant founds *reasoning as such* beyond private: when one is reasoning only in order to use one's reason, when one is reasoning as a reasonable being (and not as a cog in a machine), when one is reasoning as a member of reasonable humanity, then the use of reason must be free and public. Enlightenment is thus not merely the process by which individuals would see their own personal freedom of thought guaranteed. There is Enlightenment when the universal, the free, and the public uses of reason are superimposed on one another. (Foucault, 1984)

This is how the subject-centered rationality of Enlightenment has been recognized as the pre-bias (and therefore metaphysical), status of rational individual. Enlightenment, in its attempt to justify a foundational standpoint beyond particular differences and points of views to establish a *true public* gave rise to elitist, undemocratic consequences in politics and public-private distinction.

Consequences of true public as an outcome of reasoning as such can be titled in the nation-states of 20th century such as, a firm positivist attitude for instrumental reason, hard-edged secularism on the expense of neglecting the religious forms of lives in public and vocabularies of the peculiar publics. That was the case for Turkey in 1920s.

3. LIBERALISM OF ENLIGHTENMENT SEPARATED FROM THE RATIONALITY OF ENLIGHTENMENT

Some philosophers think Enlightenment needs reconsideration since it turned out to be an elitist project in the political organizations of the 20. century national states. This reconsideration of the elitist and central rationality of Enlightenment from an egalitarian angle generally aims at replacing the hegemony of central rationality with the priorities and interests of local contexts. This is the separation of the liberalism of Enlightenment from the rationality of Enlightenment. I consider particularly Robert Brandom's and Alasdair Macintyre's criticisms of the central rationality of Enlightenment are central in this respect.

Alasdair Macintyre, accentuating the shared forms of public life as a pre-determination of cognition, questions the privileged status of the elites who use reasoning, before and instead of *the whole reading public* claiming to have possessed the privileged, a-temporal, a-contextual stand point as representatives of the Enlightenment. Richard Rorty tells us, that it is simply to say "I am in touch with reality in a (scientific) way that you are not and accordingly I (the rational subjectivity of Enlightenment) *can* and *should* tell you what is good for us". (Rorty, 1979) Rorty, as Robert Brandom says, offers a *more holistic, less reductive* agency instead of the subjectivity of Enlightenment as the a-temporal, unconditioned condition of the center of moral obligations which is represented by *true public*. (Brandom, 2004)

It is not new of course, to point to the social boundary that is before our cognition and shapes our thought. That is to be so, since the Hegelian notion of life, via hermeneutic tradition. Dilthey said we can know things in their relation to each other as holistic agents; we, in this sense referring to contextual determination of subjects as place holders through whose veins real blood runs rather than pure process of thought. Heidegger told that, we, as place holders of being-in-the-world, *have been in and by language* and this being precedes reasoning as such. Wittgenstein taught us *we know and are able to describe in and by language*; language meaning for early Heidegger and Wittgenstein, contexts, conventions, the network of social life preceding the pure process of thought of subjectivity of Enlightenment. What is new and pertinent, nevertheless, in undermining the a-contextual subjectivity of Enlightenment is the opportunity of an egalitarian democracy (sometimes we ironically use Heidegger against Heidegger) which means more space for different interests and

priorities of ordinary people, in other words peculiar publics, unrestricted by a rational foundation beyond these differences.

That is how the rise of AKP is attributable to a progressive movement of social justice, solidarity, egalitarian commonness and reformative administration by liberal intellectuals. I will discuss this issue after bringing up how the central rationality of Enlightenment has influenced the founders of Turkish republic and the priority of secularism of public life in relation to Western positivism.

4. TURKEY AND THE PRINCIPAL ROLE OF ENLIGHTENMENT

Central rationality of Enlightenment has played a principal role in the establishment of Turkish Republic. In agreement with the Westernization of 19. century young Turkish intellectuals, Atatürk was aware of the necessity to bridge the gap between the Western positivism and Ottoman religious organization of public life. Emre Kongar says:

Since Islam dominated all areas of social, political, cultural and economic spheres of the Empire, not only as a religion, but also as a way of living, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and his friends attacked religious dogmatism in order to launch a new socio-cultural reform program. Such an act was quite meaningful from the political point of view too, as the ousted Sultan-Caliph and the old regime took their legitimate political authority from Islamic institutions. Attacking Islam as an obstacle to development was also in accordance with a firm belief in western positivism. (Kongar, 1986)

So, modern Turkish democracy was founded on *nationalism, a national economy and a positive approach to life*. Turkish Kemalists, aiming for this scientific structure of public life, imposed their reforms and the secularization of public life to the people of Islamic Ottoman society. Kongar says: ...the creation of a secular nation-state could not possibly be realized in any Islamic society without seizing political power, the proclamation of the Republic laid the groundwork for further changes. At this point one should bear in mind the fact that controlling the political power is a necessary condition for such reforms, but not a sufficient one. (Kongar, 1986)

The insufficiency of spreading the reforms to masses has given rise to a dual structure of Turkish democracy. Kemalist elites believed in the education and Westernization of ordinary people but the gap between the elitist vocabulary of Kemalist elites and ordinary people has remained. Kemalist nationalism, national economy and central rationality similar to Kantian *rasionieren* ruled country and the private differences and priorities have been submitted to the secularized public of this central rationality.

Westernization of Turkey in this respect can be associated with Charles Taylor's description of a uniform way of modernization, *a-cultural* theory of modernization in which Taylor sees

modernization “as the development and growth of Western reason, secularism and instrumental rationality”. Kemalist ideology viewed central rationality of Enlightenment as the true way for Turkish modernization on the expense of a rapture from the Ottoman cultural background. Feroz Ahmad says, “Turkey did not rise phoenix-like out of the ashes of the Ottoman Empire. It was (modernity) ‘made’ in the image of the Kemalist Elite”. Since everyday practices of ordinary people were pretty much religion oriented in the Ottoman forms of life, the gap between the Kemalist elite and ordinary people was inevitable in 1920s Turkey. The dual cultural structure of Turkish Westernization seemed to be the cost of *a-cultural* modernization in accordance with central rationality of West.

However, due to the historical developments in the West and Turkey’s endeavors to keep up with these developments as a continuation of her Westernization project, Turkey has been driven to reconsider her dual cultural structure up on which public-private tension has been maintained.

This reconsideration means to go further than the conservative republican attitude based on the central rationality of Enlightenment by the military-bureaucratic elites of 1920s. Turkey, in this conjecture faces a challenge; the thread to lose the gains of the Republic since the demand of democratization means the democratization of religious beliefs, against which Turkey has struggled since the second half of 19. century.

5. TURKISH LIBERALS FAVORING AKP AND THE PHILOSOPHICAL BACKGROUND OF THE LIBERALISM OF ENLIGHTENMENT,

I admit that, from a philosophical point of view AKP could be seen as representing a power shift from Kemalist elites to different points of views of local contexts in Turkish democracy¹. However, I conclude that, from a political point of view AKP is a threat to the very possibility of sustainability of *transferring power*, which is the condition of the possibility of democracy itself. AKP, despite the expectations of liberal intellectuals before July 2007, is not mature enough to play a decisive role in Turkish democracy similar to the separation of liberalism of Enlightenment from the rationality of Enlightenment in West. It is a threat for Turkish democracy rather than a progressive shift that Turkish liberal intellectuals have expected.

I want to look at the views of Turkish liberal intellectuals who were inclined to identify AKP with this shift after 2004 and Kemalist intellectuals who are against this identification. What I want to do is to rise a question that underlies the concerns after July 2007: *Can we view AKP as a progression in accordance with the separation of the liberalism of Enlightenment from the rationality of Enlightenment which provides more space for different interests and priorities of ordinary people unrestricted by a rational foundation beyond these differences or not?*

AKP could be considered as a step forward for Turkish democracy in the sense that the democratic ground of Turkey is mature enough for the unattended diversity of beliefs and desires of ordinary people play a more important role in politics rather than being manipulated by the elites. On the other hand, AKP could be considered as a threat for secular foundations of Turkish democracy, which is obviously one of the most important causes of Turkey's being a unique story of success in the geo-political conjecture of Middle East, if for AKP, the *neo-islamization* of Turkish republic is the ultimate aim and democracy is a means to achieve this aim.

¹ Against Rawls, who insisted on maintaining a Kantian notion of subjectivity that can be prior to its aims which are confirmed by this subjectivity, many liberal philosophers emphasized the social boundary that is prior to and thus shapes subjectivity as I have mentioned above. Will Kymlicka calls them communitarians. However, Rawls too in *Justice as Fairness: Political not Metaphysical*, accepts the priority of a non-public (religious) identity and its irrationality in communities, so long as these beliefs remain and does not effect political conviction. See Kymlicka, *Contemporary Political Philosophy, an Introduction*, Oxford University Press Inc., New York, 2002 for the critique of the attempt to reconcile religious communities and political liberalism. See also Sandel Michael, *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1982.

Turkish liberal intellectuals, acquainted with Western democracies and the recent discussions on the separation of liberalism of Enlightenment from the rationality of Enlightenment, are sympathetic with AKP's reforms towards EU membership and see AKP as a step forward for democratization of Turkey.² They think that, there is a tension between the elites' conservative republican attitude inherited from 1920s and the repressed country-side claiming more democracy through being represented by people like them, rather than a threat to secularity.

M. Hakan Yavuz says Turkish Islam, unlike Arab and Persian Islam, is not a threat for secularity as Kemalist project of the nationalization of religion accepted. Yavuz thinks Turkish Islam is "a reproduction of religious knowledge *in everyday life* by those who are raised in a Turkish milieu." He argues Turkish Islam, rather than being an attitude towards re-establishing universal principles of Islam, is about Islamiyat, (Islamicate) that is "building institutions, ideas, practices, arts", and thus "a particular way of crafting and creating one's own way of being Muslim". (Yavuz, 2004) According to Yavuz, ignorance of the constitutive role of Islam on political identity has not been successful and oppressed the religion oriented everyday practices of ordinary people. Due to the evolving socio-economical conditions and the emergence of a tax-payer middle class, Islamicate can help the formation of a new liberal and pluralistic public life. Yavuz sees Turkish Muslim intellectuals capable of bringing out novel perspectives unlike the Egyptian and Pakistani radicals and concludes that Islam, with reformed Sufi networks and soft versions of religious practice can serve as medium for different points of views and local contexts.

Turkish liberal intellectuals, similar to Yavuz, consider that Kemalist project of nationalization disregarded the local differences and, as Nur Vergin says, *territorialized version of Islam* used to inhabit a rich potential of culture, a soil out of which ordinary people's diversity of views can flourish. Murat Somer claims that AKP has contributed to the progress of Turkish democracy more than any other political party has ever done in the history Turkish of democracy. They are convinced that Turkish Islam can substitute the lack of republican-Kemalists' social justice,

² See Hakan Yavuz, *The Emergence of a New Turkey: Democracy and AK Party*, The University of Utah Press, in which he argues that AKP is an emergence of new elite that has appeared on the political stage due to the consequences of 1980. See also İhsan D. Dağı, who claims that AKP, unlike the preceding Islamist parties, has taken seriously the EU membership, human rights, democratization although it may be a result of proving itself for Kemalist elite that it is a legitimate movement. Sultan Tepe, in *Reinterpretation of Secularism in Turkey*, says AKP is not remarkably different than Kemalist politics with regard to keeping the distance between İslam and public sphere. Ziya Öniş, in *The Political Economy of Turkey's AKP*, argues that AKP has achieved an important economical success which makes TUSİAD, the most influential association of leading companies in Turkey, sympathetic with AKP.

solidarity, egalitarian commonness and reformative attitude. Turkish liberals consider, it is no longer the 1920s throughout which Kemalist intellectuals claimed *raisonieren* before and instead of Turkish people and AKP can embody this ignored and suppressed potentiality of public and make use of this potential for democratic progression. That is to view AKP no longer as a marginal Islamic political movement as a continuation of *Milli Selamet, Refah, Saadet* parties line, but a conservative democrat (muslim democrat?) party at the center of Turkish democracy. AKP, having been celebrated as the possibility of this democratization, has gained the support of liberal intellectuals before July 2007.

Liberal intellectuals consider AKP's rise and the culture it represents as a democratic progression, since it is no longer up to standard in Western democracies, publics different from each other by having different members with different interests are to sacrifice the idiosyncrasies, non-rational beliefs and diversity of view points for the sake of national identity that was understandable in 1920s' conditions. Liberals think, the alarmed sensitivity of the Kemalist elites is not to the point but they are rather concerned about the reallocation of power to the representatives of ordinary people, who accept AKP as their *conversational partners*, unlike the representatives of the rhetoric of 1920s.

Liberals thus, assume that Turkish democracy now is mature enough, for the unattended different beliefs and desires of ordinary people play a more important role in politics rather than being manipulated by the *reading public* from whose standpoint of public reasoning was not questionable.

The pivotal role of rationality in Enlightenment has rendered decision making process a mechanism that submits private, to public that is purely rational and represented by some privileged people, who can reason what is rational and what is not. Similar to the rationality argument of Enlightenment in the West, the endeavor to keep the 1920s' authority in Turkey overlooks the local context that the ordinary people's reasoning, the conversations, argumentations, in short, diversity of views of the culture has taken place. That is the main reason which underlies the shortcomings of Turkish economic growth, international prestige, and multi-cultural attitude in democracy; to sum up, lack of wealth and power from liberal intellectuals' angle.

6. KEMALIST INTELLECTUALS' RESERVE ON AKP

Kemalist intellectuals, on the other hand, state their concern for secular foundations of Turkish democracy, which is obviously one of the most important causes of its being a unique example of success in the geo-politic conjecture of Middle East. Kemalist intellectuals think, the English word secularism, the term which is used in Turkish as based on the French *laïcité* that denotes "separation"; the principle of separation between religion and the state has been undermined by Islamic fundamentals since 1920s in Turkey. That is unacceptable for them as the condition of the possibility of Turkish democracy is the sustainability of secularism which distinguishes Turkey as the only actual democracy in Middle East. The denial of religious authority and ruling class relying on this authority was very central to the foundation of Turkish Republic for historical reasons which can be subject to another article. I want to point to the power shift in accordance with this denial and the new elites' hegemony based on laicism that gradually, in liberals' point of view, turned out to neglect the ordinary people's forms of life.

The founders of Turkish Republic, casting off with the ex-authority that Turkish public had been thinking in accordance with, took over the responsibility of thinking for oneself as making the public use of the reason of one's in 1920s. That is replacing the religious basis of pre-Enlightenment Ottoman authority with the rationality of Enlightenment. Emre Kongar says:

The elites that undertook the agonizing task of saving the Empire were members of the military and the civilian bureaucracy, since the stagnation of Ottoman economic development prevented the rise of another powerful class such as the bourgeoisie or other groups. (Kongar, 1986)

This replacement, which was a necessary and progressive step in the unique historical circumstances of its time, naturally gave rise to a new hegemony of another powerful class in Kongar's words, for the sake of which diversity of viewpoints were submitted to this new authority. This new authority set the norms and rules along with which Turkish modernization can and should pursue. That is to say, they created their own discourse and linguistic framework to overcome, regulate and homogenize publics' difference from each other by having different forms of life with different priorities.

Bernard Lewis sees the relation between Turkish democracy and Turkish Islam in a different way than Yavuz. Although he too, states the uniqueness of Turkish democracy is interrelated with the unique experience of Turkish Islam, Lewis analyzes the project of Kemalist nationalization was very successful when its sustainability is considered. Kemalist intellectuals agree with Lewis that Kemalist project successfully managed the balance between the long term sustainability of Turkish democracy that is the condition of the possibility for itself and the risk of the contribution of ordinary peoples' everyday practices that were pretty much religion oriented. They are concerned that Turkish democracy is still vulnerable to totalitarian-fundamental Islamist streams which can be associated with Bernard Lewis's analogy of Turkish democracy as a strong medicine:

The vicissitudes of democracy under the late Ottomans, under Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, and under his successors would seem to confirm the belief that democracy is a strong medicine, which must be administered in small and only gradually increased doses. Too large and too sudden a dose can kill the patient. (Lewis, 1987)

Kemalist intellectuals believe in the long term secret agenda of AKP, that is not really a secret, the *neo-Islamization* of Turkish republic. They suppose that, AKP is not one of the legitimate political parties standing for the interests of ordinary people and play the democratic game in accordance with its rules sincerely, on the contrary, they hold AKP responsible for struggling to bring *şeriat* (Islamic law) back and making use of democracy as a mean rather than accepting it as an end in itself.

Kemalist intellectuals, unlike liberals, emphasize the uniqueness and vulnerability of the conditions of the possibility of Turkish republic, namely the secularity principle and think that it is under threat by AKP's gaining even more power in 2007. From Kemalist point of view, AKP has not truly appropriated the principles of constitutionalist structure of Turkey but merely pretend to have done so, in order to disguise its real agenda that is to make sure that conditions become mature enough for a shift to *şeriat*.

7. CONCLUSION: PHILOSOPHICALLY YES, POLITICALLY NO!

This is not an *either-or* case according to which we can easily answer whether the Kemalists or liberal intellectuals are right. It is true that the progressive nature of Enlightenment can run up against its own conditions of possibility and the separation of liberalism of Enlightenment from the rationality of Enlightenment can be useful for a more democratic politics.

So, is AKP an opportunity for a more democratic politics in Turkey? Is it an opportunity for a redistribution of power in this sense and a progression? Is it a liberal step forward from the conservative republican nature of 1920s?

Is AKP, in other words, a medium through which, the differences (different interests, different priorities of different place holders) of ordinary people which are not restricted by the 1920s' central authority in Turkey can come to stage and contribute to the progress of Turkish democracy? Is it an egalitarian opportunity for local contexts and the diversity of viewpoints by means of which, as Rorty reminds us, the liberation of historical progression beyond the constraints of necessary conclusions of a rational attitude towards history?

The answer cannot be thought within an *either-or* reductionism but can be considered from political and philosophical angles differently. I think AKP philosophically could have been an egalitarian opportunity for Turkish democracy. However, particularly after July 2007, AKP has demonstrated that its political priority is the Islamization of public life. Philosophically considered, the ordinary publics' priorities have embodied in AKP and the underpinned rational centrality can no longer disregard their peculiarities in accordance with the separation of the liberalism of Enlightenment from the rationality of Enlightenment as I tried to show with refer to Rorty and Macintyre above.

The political answer is dependent up on AKP's choice of maintaining or undermining the continuity and sustainability of democracy. That is to say, the egalitarian opportunity can be useful in Turkey, similar to the separation of the liberalism of Enlightenment from its rational foundations in West, if only the democratic transfer of the political power does not entail a threat to the very possibility of

sustainability of *transferring power*, which is democracy itself, in liberal democracy. My answer for AKP from a political point of view in this respect, is *no*.

7.A. DEMOCRATIC PROGRESSION LIMITED BY THE CONDITIONS OF THE POSSIBILITY OF DEMOCRATIC PROGRESSION ITSELF

What we can drop is the rational foundations of Enlightenment. What we cannot drop is the notion of the condition of possibility for any sustainable progress. Liberal democracy is, not a radical politics and thus, it requires long term sustainability that is the condition of the possibility for itself. That is to say, we can drop the epistemologically founded rationality of Enlightenment but we replace it with some kind of agreement which assures the sustainability of democracy as well as the shift of power from the elitists to ordinary people. It is good to expect more representation of the diversity of views of culture, provided that this representation accepts the pre-requisite of democracy that is the condition of the possibility of democracy itself. There is no pre-established rational ground to describe the rules of politics but there is a necessity to agree on the norms and rules which guarantee the possibility of sustainability of democracy. Temporal agreements replace universal grounds of social contracts but the rule-governed character of publicity itself is irreplaceable.

So, any political party can be seemed as a progress in liberal democracy if only it exercises its power within the limits of the conditions of the possibility of democracy. The unconditioned condition of democracy is secularism in Turkey and that is why secularism is the possibility and guarantee of democracy. The liberal idea unconstrained from the privileged rationality of Enlightenment tells us that we no longer need a distinguished activity of reason, reasoning as such, to find a way of applying the mathematical and geometrical certainty of reason to moral action to transcend the diversity of view points. Nevertheless, this philosophical idea is not very useful for politics. Politics is geo-politics and the local contexts can exercise their power in as much as they agree on the conditions of the possibility of transferring power, democratic sustainability that is understandably secularism for the only liberal democracy in Middle East.

The question is now, whether AKP is politically capable of maintaining the continuity and sustainability of democracy in Turkey as I argued above. We need to see whether AKP is politically democratic enough to be an egalitarian opportunity in Turkey or a totalitarian movement which is far from actualizing the philosophical possibility of the liberalism of Enlightenment. I think, particularly after the July 2007 elections it no longer is, and I will explain why.

7.B. POLITICAL ANSWER: TOTALITARIAN OR DEMOCRATIC? WHAT HAPPENED AFTER JULY 2007?

Emre Unluçayaklı, whom I fully agree with, sees AKP as a lost opportunity for an egalitarian movement in Turkish democracy that could have provide more room for local contexts and particular interests of ordinary people restricted by the totalitarian nature of Kemalist hegemony. (Unluçayaklı, 2007) Vahid Abdülmeçid says, in spite of the democratic appearance of AKP, there is no sign that it is committed to democracy rather than using the victory of 2007 elections for a totalitarian hegemony. (Abdülmeçid, 2007) Abdülmeçid points to the crises of the election of president and claims that AKP never tended to negotiate but pushed its own candidate which shows its reluctance for a national consensus. For Abdülmeçid, unlike its democratic discourse, AKP does not want to delimit its political power in accordance with constitutional institutions as it should be in a real democracy. Recep T. Erdoğan, the leader of AKP, declared that he would quit politics if he will be obliged to share power in a coalition that is definitely not an example of democratic maturity. He puts the problem whether the people support AKP or not, which means for him there is no need for any democratic consensus when the majority of people (%47) voted for AKP. AKP has primed a new law that legitimizes opinion poll as an effective instrument which favors majority over the democratic distribution of rights and weakens the role of minorities. (Cumhuriyet, 2007) That is a totalitarian inclination that renders democracy a regime of majority. Nicholas Birch thinks this is a totalitarian inclination and disagrees with the idea that AKP can be democratic and mature enough to see the rights of individuals in equal weight (Birch, 2008):

Since 2004, though, reforms have ground to a halt. Reformist rhetoric has increasingly given way to authoritarian talk about "the will of the people" typical of right-wing Turkish parties drunk on power. AKP continues to insist it supports rights for all. But its ill-conceived efforts this February to end a headscarf ban in universities made it clear it saw some rights as more important than others.

Erdoğan charged press and NGO's with conspiring against AKP straightforwardly without any concrete evidence when criticisms became a bit though; blamed them with corruption rather than regarding criticisms with democratic maturity. Erdoğan maintains absolute power in AKP and has been reluctant about sharing power with the party's institutions and has not let anybody against him to be re-elected in 2007. Despite the expectations, he did not change the minister of education who has been at the core of criticisms against AKP's constant endeavors towards the Islamization of education.

7-C) ISLAMIZATION OF EDUCATION AND PUBLIC LIFE

AKP insists on providing imam-hatip high schools (a religious school) higher education opportunities as a democratic right which means a democratic opportunity for individuals who are educated from the early ages for not being a democrat but a committed Muslim. There are more than 350 imam-hatip high schools all over the county with a % 90 percent increase of students in the last 4 years. A majority of this recent increase consists of girls who can never be imams after years of religious education (www.ntv.msnb-c.com.tr 2008). AKP even tries to free religious pre-school education besides imam-hatips which is obviously not approaching education as a system to create critical individuals who are capable of free choice as it should be the case in sustainable democracies. The islamization of education means, the individuals of the generation to come are not educated to be able to view religion as a historical-contextual phenomenon, to apprehend Islam as one of the religions among others but to take Islam as a divine discourse of universally valid truth beyond criticism. (Ekşi, 2007)

The empirical findings of a recent research by a well-known company, Konda on the consequences of the Islamization of public can be observed in *Religion, Secularity and Scarf*. The leader of Konda, Tarhan Erdem, who has proved his liability and objectivity unquestionably in reflecting public opinion through his findings, published the results of a research carried out in December 2007 in Milliyet. (Erdem, 2007) According to this study, the number of women who use scarf (turban) as a symbol of their political attitude in public realm rather than a private religious belief has increased up to 2 million which signifies a % 400 percent increase compared to another research carried out by Tarhan Erdem in 2003. The % 68.9 of Turkish people thinks public officers can use *turban*.

After having Abdullah Gül elected as president despite his commitment that he would seek agreement with other political parties and consider social consensus for presidency rather than pressing on AKP's candidate, Tayyip Erdoğan rushed to change the constitution to free *turban* (scarf) in universities and consequently in official use. (Radikal, 2008) Abdullah Gül selected the new head of *YÖK*, the head of the institution responsible for the coordination and administration of universities, who declared that the freedom of *turban* was his first priority. The need of change for a civil and better constitution has been reduced to a change for an Islamic freedom which, according

to the findings of a recent research carried out by Prof. Toprak and Prof. Kalaycıođlu, has only %1 weight among the reasons that deprive girls from higher education (Toprak and Kalaycıođlu 2004).³ Another important development is the new arrangement in civil law that lets AKP determines the procedure of employment judges and prosecutors according to interview that will be held by a jury majority of which (4 out of 6) is established by political authority.

These statistics signify a totalitarian politics and a transformation of public life from secular to Islamic; well beyond Yavuz's argument that Turkish Islam, rather than a public project, is about Islamiyat, (Islamicate) that is a private practice, *a particular way of crafting and creating one's own way of being Muslim*. (Yavuz, 2004) Islamization of public life comes to stage as a revenge of oppressed fundamentalist religious organization of society, rather than Nur Vergin's affirmative description a form of life as a *rich potential of culture, a soil out of which ordinary people's diversity of views can flourish*.

³ According to the study, only %9.8 of the girls goes to university after high school. The reasons why the % 90.2 cannot go to university are ranked as follows: %29.8 cannot pass the entrance exam, %14.6 left university after marriage, % 10.5 are not allowed by family, % 9.8 do not want to study, % 6.3 cannot afford university and only 1.0 because of *turban*.

7-D) LIBERALS WITHDRAWING THEIR SUPPORT FROM AKP

The most decisive political agenda of following years, Türker Alkan says very thoroughly, will be the growing tension between AKP's totalitarian attempts to hold all the institutions of political arena and the struggle of these institutions against this pressure. (Alkan, 2008) Many liberal intellectuals who used to support AKP for its efforts to start negotiations with EU and macro-economic reforms have withdrawn their support due to AKP's reluctant attitude for democratization and EU reforms after July 2007. Mehmet Altan is one of the leading liberal intellectuals, who, has been favoring and encouraging AKP particularly for democratic reforms after 2004; now says AKP is no longer committed to democratization. (Altan, 2008) Ertuğrul Özkök, the editor of Hürriyet, the most prevalent, well-known newspaper in Turkey, used to advocate AKP in 2004. After the elections in July 2007, he says AKP's politics is now far away from a culture of democracy and AKP's totalitarian attitudes turned out to be the bullying (zorbalık) of majority which gives rise to a chaotic atmosphere rather than a consensus among the institutions. (Özkök, 2008) Cüneyt Ülsever, a previous strong supporter of AKP, says after July 2007, AKP is no longer a democratic possibility for Turkey; on the contrary, AKP is trying to seize the independent institutions so as to acquire absolute power. Ülsever claims, AKP's liberal attitude is reduced to a slogan: "*It is our turn now!*" which signifies a revenge of Islamic majority against the Kemalist statuesque. (Ülsever, 2008)

That is using democracy to prepare the ground for *liberating* Islamic fundamental-totalitarian attitudes from the conditions of the possibility of the sustainability of democracy rather than the shift of power from the elitists to ordinary people. Thereby, I think even though AKP seems philosophically an egalitarian opportunity for Turkish democracy, from a political point of view it is a totalitarian movement. I regard AKP as an outcome of the impasse of Kemalist discourse. I believe AKP is totalitarian ever since it cannot go beyond reacting against the elitist hegemony. Sustainability of a democratic progress requires more than reaction although it may begin with reacting against statuesque. The most obvious feature of underdevelopment is getting stuck at the ideological oppositions which are not progressive and sustainable since these ideological oppositions bring nothing but a new version of tension between the dual cultural structures. If Yavuz were right in his analyses that the constitutive role of Islam on political identity and the religion oriented everyday practices of ordinary people would contribute to the evolving socio-economical conditions and the emergence of a tax-payer middle class, and Islamicate can help the formation of a new liberal and pluralistic public life, this egalitarian opportunity would primarily

think technically. On the contrary, AKP has been found guilty of being the center of fundamental Islamic streams by Supreme Court in 2008. Many examples of corruption became manifest in Turkey after July 2007 which shows the ignorance of technical and sustainable long term economical and political vision but the hegemonic priority of a *new true anti-elitist Islamic public*. AKP does not seem to be creative and long term-oriented enough to manipulate the reactive discourse of the ordinary people against the rational centrality of Kemalist hegemony for these discourses turn out to be political and economical alternatives for more and at the same time sustainable democracy and economical development. AKP could have make use of their peculiarities compliant with the separation of the liberalism of Enlightenment from the rationality of Enlightenment in Turkey so as to strengthen democracy but I think it could not.

Democratic politics, unlike radical politics requires the togetherness of local contexts and the diversity of viewpoints rather than establishing the opposition of believers and non-believers dichotomy as central to power struggle. AKP seems to replace totalitarian character of Kemalist rationality of Turkish Enlightenment with a totalitarian regime of religious majority, a new version of *true public* that is not really a step forward, but a misuse of a philosophical possibility of the creativity and productivity of the peculiar publics.

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