

**IDRC Final Technical Report**  
March 2009

**Project Title:** Islamist Parties, Domestic and External Mechanisms, and Democratization: Lessons from Turkey's AKP

**IDRC Grant Number:** 103886-001

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## I. SYNTHESIS

This project shows that both the emergence of an Islamist-rooted yet manifestly pro-liberal democracy and pro-West party in Turkey, and its illiberal tendencies in areas related to secularism, social freedoms, and freedom of thought, are tied to a prior, incomplete transformation of political elite values. The findings demonstrate the importance of elite value change for “democracies in transition,” and the importance of public platforms such as free media where elite deliberation, contestation, and value change can occur, for democratizing or liberalizing countries with weak political parties and Islamist movements. The findings also attest to both the potential and the limits of political-Islamic movements’ ability to adapt to liberal, pluralistic democracy. On one hand, what can be called “conditional and promising inclusion”—a mixture of participation in democratic politics and secularist authoritarian redlines—led the reformist Turkish Islamist intelligentsia to adopt the main principles and discourse of liberal democracy such as free and competitive elections, the rule of law, and human rights including ethnic and non-Muslim religious minority rights. On the other hand, this “moderation” and adaptation to liberal democracy was incomplete and vague with respect to secularism, and rights and freedoms regarding such issues as Muslim religious minorities, sexual minorities, and women.

The project undertook the most comprehensive and systematic content analysis of the Turkish press, and, one of the most comprehensive in the world. It filled an important gap in the research on Islam and democracy by examining religious beliefs and values via falsifiable hypotheses and by comparing them with secular beliefs and values. The project analyzed the contents of 42,463 articles in 4850 issues of four Islamic-conservative and two pro-secular newspapers between the years of 1996 and 2004. Each article was coded according to its content on numerous questions in 13 categories that included democracy, pluralism, secularism, nationalism, human rights, and the western world. This makes it possible to test a large variety of hypotheses regarding when, how, and to what extent political Islam in Turkey adapted to modern democracy. In a nutshell, an authoritarian secularist intervention in 1997 and the EU’s acceptance of Turkey’s candidacy caused major shifts in Islamist thinking in favor of democracy, human rights, and the western world. Islamist thinking became similar to the pro-secular in terms of its intellectual sources and support for basic political democracy. However, major differences remained on secularism, religious influence in social life, and specific areas of pluralism such as women’s rights. Furthermore, pro-secular commitment to democracy and pluralism falls when it comes to acceptance of religious/Islamist groups, which undermines the Islamists’ moderation. The findings were complemented and developed by in-depth interviews with social-political actors and analyses of civil society reports.

The findings imply that researchers should do more to conceptualize platforms like the media where elite and constituency values are contested and developed, as a source of political change and democratization in Muslim polities where political parties and civil society tend to be weak and authoritarian themselves. Systematic content analysis shows that the media act as political actors, their contents responding to political developments in meaningful ways that help to explain complex political processes. Politically, the findings support the view that Islamists respond to social-political incentives, and can adapt to pluralistic democracy, like other religious and ideological political actors. However, both positive incentives and unambiguous institutional boundaries and checks and balances are significant in stimulating democratic change. Furthermore, major areas of potentially irreconcilable and conflict-prone differences remain between Islamist and pro-secular thinking which can only be sustained in a political system where religious and secular forces “effectively and constructively” check and balance each other. Governments and NGO’s who want to support democratization in the Middle East and elsewhere should produce projects to create platforms like the media where elite deliberation and contestation can occur even in a limited democracy.

## II. THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

The original goal of this project was to assess the sustainability of Turkey's main Islamist movement's transformation into a pro-liberal democracy and pro-West political movement represented by the ruling AKP (Justice and Development Party), by systematically examining to what extent, how, and when the AKP's constituency's values changed during and after the foundation of the party. For this purpose, it employed "conceptual development and theory-building" via literature review and academic exchanges, and a main "empirical research component" aimed at investigating and documenting changes in constituency values via systematic content analysis of Islamic-conservative newspapers and civil society organization reports between 1996 and 2004, and interviews with social-political actors.

During the research, three major insights were gained, and the project evolved and was expanded accordingly. First, the changes in the contents of the Islamic-conservative newspapers were found to be even more multi-dimensional and informative than originally predicted. At the same time, it became clear that much of the changes were endogenous to the changes in pro-secular newspapers, and an adequate assessment of the contents of Islamic-conservative newspapers could only be accomplished via systematic comparisons with the contents of pro-secular newspapers. The content analysis was accordingly expanded to cover two pro-secular newspapers and to test more hypotheses.

Second, detailed examination of the political events revealed that the impact of the changing media content was even more important for recent political developments than originally thought. Media content was originally thought of as a proxy for, or a reflection of, constituency values. During the research it became apparent that the media operated like a partially autonomous (and at times militant) political actor or interest group in Turkish groups. In some ways it acted as a major platform where elite political values evolved and political confrontation and deliberation were played out in a complex relationship of interaction and competition with political parties. Although partially autonomous, the press was often ideologically motivated also, embracing a self-anointed mission to influence or pressure political parties and other actors. Furthermore, many newspapers were intellectually or, at times, semi-organically linked with political parties, whereby some journalists acted as informal advisors for political parties. Overall, the media seemed to operate as a substitute platform where the ideological and policy-related debates and deliberations that could otherwise take place within strong and democratic political parties were taking place

This insight was borne out by the major political developments during the research, in particular in the post-summer 2007 period. So-called intense "media wars" began between the government and the pro-secular media on one hand, and between the Islamic-conservative and pro-secular media on the other hand, which included among other things a call by the Prime Minister to boycott a major pro-secular media group, and a subsequent USD 500 million tax penalty on the media group in question. Accordingly, the theoretical framework was modified to include the media content's role as a platform where Islamic and secular elite beliefs and values were contested, deliberated, and changed, in addition to the media content's role as a partial instigator and reflection of changes in constituency beliefs and values. The theoretical and empirical literature on the two-way relationships between media content and public opinion and values were reviewed, informing the conceptual arguments developed in the project's scholarly output.

Third, after 2007, the AKP displayed increasingly conservative and illiberal tendencies particularly in issues related to social freedoms and freedom of thought, in addition to its continuing commitment to electoral democracy. On one hand, this increased the explanatory and predictive values of the project as the project's findings reflected the prevalence of both

liberal and illiberal values among Islamic actors. On the other hand, it also became necessary to develop more hypotheses to explain the AKP's "illiberal turn."

### **The Methodology**<sup>1</sup>

The newspapers that were content analyzed, and their average daily circulations in 1996 (rounded up to the nearest thousand) were four Islamic-conservative newspapers, namely, *Milli Gazete* (18,000), *Zaman* (259,000), *Yeni Şafak* (23,000), and *Vakit* (35,000), and two pro-secular newspapers, namely, *Milliyet* (629,000), and *Cumhuriyet* (48,000).<sup>2</sup> By 2008, the combined circulation of the religious newspapers increased to roughly 1 million, the circulation of *Cumhuriyet* remained around the same but that of *Milliyet* fell to around 260,000.

The goal of the content analysis has been to track the relative attention to, and contending views and judgments in regard to 13 categories:

1. Electoral democracy
2. Liberal democracy
3. Social, cultural, and religious pluralism
4. Political pluralism
5. Secularism
6. Human rights
7. Hijab / Headscarf question
8. Group identity and definition (Religious and secular self-definition of their own identities)
9. Nationalism
10. Modernization
11. The West
12. Liberal market economics
13. External world

The primary aim has been to document and quantify "manifest" rather than "latent" meaning.<sup>3</sup> The difference from framing analyses is that, rather than trying to trace a fixed number of frames, the goal is to trace references to as many different normative judgments and code words as possible so as to capture changing frames of meaning. Thus, the coders were *not* instructed to try to infer the overall opinion of an article. For example, if an article on nationalism contained arguments and examples both favoring and critical of nationalism as an ideology or sentiment, they were instructed to code both positive and negative judgments for the article on nationalism. This reduced the role of their subjective judgments as their job was not to make predictions and judgments about what the dominant viewpoint in the article was or which particular frame the article fit more than other frames. Instead, their role was to code all the views and considerations expressed in a manifest way. Opinion can be considered as

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<sup>1</sup> Largely adopted from the enclosed manuscript, Murat Somer, "Democracy (For Me): Religious And Secular Beliefs And Social And Political Pluralism in Turkey," February 2009.

<sup>2</sup> In 1996, *Vakit* was published under the name *Akit*.

<sup>3</sup> For examples of quantitative content analyses, see, among others, Klaus Krippendorff and Mary Angela Bock. *The Content Analysis Reader*. (Los Angeles, London, New Delhi and Singapore: SAGE, 2009); Yoshiko M. Herrera. *Imagined Economies: The Sources of Russian Regionalism*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Murat Somer, "Resurgence and Remaking of Identity: Civil Beliefs, Domestic and External Dynamics, and the Turkish Mainstream Discourse on Kurds," *Comparative Political Studies* 38 (6) (2005): 591-622; Frank R. Baumgartner, Suzanna L. De Boef, and Amber E. Boydston. *The Decline of the Death Penalty and the Discovery of Innocence*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008). For framing analysis, see, among others, Entman, "Framing: Toward Clarification of A Fractured Paradigm." and Jörg Matthes and Matthias Kohring. "The Content Analysis of Media Frames: Toward Improving Reliability and Validity," *Journal of Communication* 58 (2008): 258-279.

consisting of predispositions as well as “considerations.”<sup>4</sup> Thus, the method is designed to capture not only views but also considerations, which can turn into views and predispositions in the future.

For example, if an article in general was praising human rights but also pointed to some examples where they terrorists abused human rights and endangered security or where human rights seemed to conflict with some notion of “Islamic values,” the coders coded both positive and negative judgments on human rights. They also had an option to code “neutral”: when no normative claims were made. Thus, in a sense, the coders coded views and considerations, not “articles,” “texts,” or the presumed authors’ dominant values. This made it possible to code the changing composition and balance of different views and considerations that were manifest in a particular newspaper.

The content analysis consisted of three parts, which are explained in detail in the Project Design and Implementation section below. In a nutshell, the main part began in April 2007 and ended in December 2008, and in about 4850 newspaper issues, more than 42,463 articles were found relevant and systematically analyzed by trained coders. Before moving on to the findings, it should be mentioned that the analysis created an extremely rich data set and the analysis of the data set is ongoing. Hence, the analysis of all the findings will take more time and be published in a proposed book. The discussion below summarizes the findings reached to date, pending further examination and interpretation. Only some figures are given here as examples.<sup>5</sup>

### **The Hypotheses**

The case of Turkish Political Islam and the AKP offers a valuable “crucial case” to examine when and how political Islamic parties moderate politically and ideologically, and how sustainable such development may be. The AKP represents Turkey’s religious-conservative modernizers, or “conservative globalists,” which both benefited from secular modernization and resented its perceived “anti-religious” tendencies.<sup>6</sup> The party also represents a major crucial case of political Islam’s (PI) moderation. The party emerged from within PI, by breaking away from the old-style Islamic movement represented by the RP (Welfare Party) with a clearly more liberal and democratic program and discourse. Islamist parties had hitherto been identified as extreme-rightist and anti-systemic in Turkish politics.<sup>7</sup> Thus, it is a clear manifestation of PI’s change in the direction of political moderation.

This moderation occurred in a context of free and fair elections which regularly change governments, and lasted long enough so that one can consider the possibility of durable moderation. There continue to exist, however, major doubts about the sincerity and sustainability of the AKP’s moderation and its effects on democracy, within Turkish society as well as among outside observers. Furthermore, as mentioned above, especially following 2007, the AKP displayed illiberal tendencies in addition to its overall pro-liberal government since 2002.

SH. Original Sustainability Hypothesis: *If the AKP’s change is sustainable, we will observe that its constituency’s discourse shifted toward the values of pluralistic democracies, in addition to apparent changes in the party’s program and discourse. The underlying*

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<sup>4</sup> Zaller, *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion*.

<sup>5</sup> For a fuller illustration, see Somer, “Democracy (For Me): Religious And Secular Beliefs And Social and Political Pluralism in Turkey.”

<sup>6</sup> Ziya Öniş, “Conservative Globalism at the Crossroads: The Justice and Development Party and the Thorny Path to Democratic Consolidation in Turkey,” *Mediterranean Politics*, 14(1) (2009): 21-40.

<sup>7</sup> Ali Çarkoğlu and Ersin Kalaycıoğlu, *Turkish Democracy Today: Elections, Protest and Stability in an Islamic Society* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2007).

*assumption is that the discursive change indicates some change in constituency values, because it either results from actual changes in these values or, even if the values have not changed yet, the changing discourse will affect these values over time.*

This hypothesis was developed and gained more theoretical depth during the research. The interdependencies between the religious and secular discourses were also recognized:

RSH Revised Sustainability Hypothesis: *If the AKP's "moderation" is sustainable in a particular area, we will observe that (a) the content of Islamic-conservative media changed, or is changing, to reflect reconciliation of religious-conservative and liberal-democratic beliefs and values (b) those Islamic-conservative newspapers that represent the "new Islamist" or "conservative democratic" orientation of the AKP will display more liberal-democratic values than the newspapers representing "old Islamism," and (c) the content of the pro-secular newspapers should also display more tolerant and pro-democratic values with respect to issues related to religion and Islamism.*

In addition, the religious-secular divide and polarization in Turkish society and politics especially after 2007 revealed the existence of a series of preconceptions about Islamic-conservative and Islamist actors on behalf of pro-secular segments of society. These preconceptions could be tested through a large numbers of hypotheses. The following are examples from the hypotheses that have been evaluated to date.

H1. Religious actors have an electoral and majoritarian (as opposed a liberal-pluralistic) understanding of democracy, disregarding its requirements such as individual and minority rights.

H2. Religious actors embrace democracy as a means to achieve Islamic ends but not as a value in itself.

H3. Religious actors have embraced pluralism and pluralistic democracy while the seculars have become more authoritarian, especially vis-à-vis their relations with religious people.

H4. The secularist-authoritarian interventions of February 28, 1997 and the EU's acceptance of Turkey's candidacy for membership have caused Islamists to change their conception of democracy and pluralism.

H5. The seculars supported the February 28 interventions and in general support military interventions to protect secularism.

H6. The AKP's coming to power has caused seculars to become (a) less democratic and (b) more diversity-averse.

H7. Religious actors synthesize modernity and indigenous values by justifying modern concepts such as democracy and pluralism in terms of indigenous (Islamic or Turkish) values, models, and intellectual sources.

H8. Secular actors are westernizers justifying modern concepts such as democracy and pluralism in terms of western values, models, and intellectual sources.

H9. Secular actors are more amenable to social diversity and pluralism than religious actors are.

H10. Religious actors increasingly view matters of faith and life style as individual choices.

H11. Religious (secular) actors embrace social pluralism for Muslims (seculars) but not for non-Muslims (unseculars or anti-seculars).

H12. Secular (religious) actors are more amenable to pluralism in the sense of positive views on groups such as non-Muslims, Kurds, Alevis, women, gays, and people with heterodox beliefs and life styles.

H13. Religious actors have developed more supportive views on secularism.

H14. Religious actors' conception of reforming Turkish secularism envisions a greater role for religion (a) in state affairs (b) in social affairs.

### III. RESEARCH FINDINGS

#### 1. Democracy

The findings indicate that the extent to which the religious-conservative press embraced democracy converged on the level at which the secular press embraced democracy, and “new Islamist” newspapers displayed more commitment to democracy than the “old Islamists.” Moreover, the understanding of democracy changed in a way to emphasize liberal vs. electoral democracy. Thus, the first two parts of the revised sustainability hypothesis RSH above were confirmed *with respect to political values*. Based on the religious actors' changing values alone, the AKP's commitment to political democracy can be seen as sustainable. However, RSH (c) was not confirmed with respect to democracy. The commitment of pro-secular press declined whenever an Islamist or Islamist-rooted government was in power. The pro-secular press, which is otherwise against military interventions in democracy, was also more supportive of it whenever it was deemed “to protect secularism.” Possible reasons for this skepticism are explored by the subsequent hypotheses.

Hence, the findings confirmed only the first two parts of the revised sustainability hypothesis RSH above, rejecting RSH (c). The AKP's moderation cannot be sustainable until the social-political reasons causing the pro-secular fears of “democracy under Islamists” are successfully addressed. Supporting this prediction, as discussed above, the AKP displayed increasingly “illiberal” tendencies after the secularist mobilization and protests against the AKP in 2007.<sup>8</sup> In the eyes of the pro-secular actors, of course, these protests against a democratically elected government were caused by the government's “anti-secular” policies in areas such as government recruitment and social affairs themselves. This question was tested later to further revise the RSH.

These conclusions were reached after testing a number of aspects of democracy such as “democracy as a means vs. value,” “support for military interventions,” and “human rights.” For illustrative purposes, only the figures “electoral vs. liberal democracy” and pro-secular beliefs regarding Islamists' seeing democracy as a means are provided here.

#### *Electoral vs. Liberal Democracy*

Muslim public opinion in general is not necessarily less supportive of democracy than the rest of the world.<sup>9</sup> The findings of the content analysis are consistent with this observation. An article related to the category of democracy could contain three types of opinions, or a combination of them. It could contain positive opinions that highlight its benefits, say, representation and freedom; negative opinions that highlight its costs, say, conflicts with Islamic principles; and neutral opinions that do not make any manifest value judgments. In the three religious newspapers content analyzed, within a total of 5,853 codings of democracy, there were only 607, or 10.4 percent “negative” codings, i.e. opposing or skeptical views referring to the flaws or failures of democracy.

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<sup>8</sup> See Murat Somer, “Moderate Islam and Secularist Opposition in Turkey: Implications for the World, Muslims and Secular Democracy,” *Third World Quarterly* 28 (7), pp. 1271-1289 (October 2007)

<sup>9</sup> Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart. *Sacred and Secular: Religion and Politics Worldwide*, pp. 146-147. However, Muslims also tend to favor the clergy having more influence in government.



One may ask, however, which conception of democracy Islamic non-state actors embrace. More specifically, the first hypothesis above regarded the question:

H1. Do religious actors have an electoral and majoritarian understanding of democracy, disregarding substantive, pluralistic democracy's other requirements such as individual and minority rights?

Do Turkish Islamic actors embrace democracy primarily as electoral democracy, which may be abandoned or turned into "illiberal democracy" once Islamists solidify their power through elections, or primarily as "liberal" or "pluralistic" democracy that protects minority and individual rights through the rule of law, whoever is in government? <sup>10</sup> Certainly, these are not mutually exclusive dimensions of democracy. Both the will of the majority and the protection of minority rights are important for democracy. However, the ratio between the two is informative by showing the changing emphasis of different actors' understanding of democracy, and whether or not their understanding emphasizes pluralism.

Based on the preliminary analysis, *electoral democracy* was defined for the analysts as "the discussion of democracy by focusing on its roles in determining the rulers through elections and in bringing *the* people's will upon government." *Liberal democracy* was defined as "the discussion of democracy by emphasizing its features such as freedoms, human rights, rule of law, and minority rights." Table 1 shows the ratio of the times democracy was discussed primarily as liberal democracy to the times it was discussed primarily as electoral democracy in each newspaper. A shift of emphasis occurred in Islamic newspapers from electoral democracy to liberal democracy, which is most visible in positive codings. While the ratio was 1.1 in 1996 and 1997, after 1998, the positive codings for liberal democracy were at least double the positive codings for electoral democracy. In other words, in discussing positive considerations regarding democracy, the terms of reference came predominantly from a liberal conception of democracy.

The findings indicate that religious media actors' support for liberal democracy is converging on a similar value as the secular support for liberal democracy. Figure 2 compares religious newspapers to the secular newspapers. The interviews also conveyed the sense that Islamic non-state actors were at home with at least the rhetoric of liberal democracy.

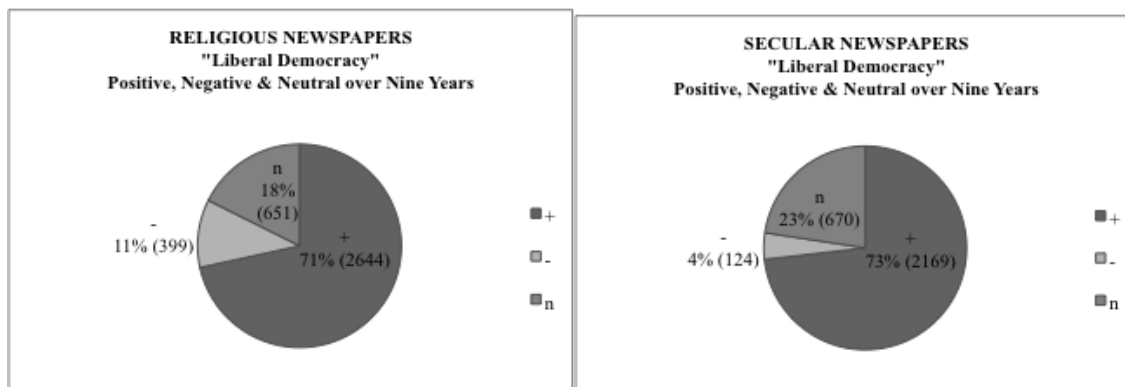
The liberal/electoral democracy ratio was higher for secular newspapers, the yearly average being 1.9 for religious newspapers and 3.0 for the secular. However, it is interesting to see that in those years when an Islamic party was elected to power (1996, 1997, 2003, and 2004), and in years that led to the elections that brought an Islamic party to power (2001 and 2002), the ratio for negative codings was less than one. In other words, more of the *negative* codings for democracy in secular newspapers came from electoral democracy in those years. Arguably, its allowance to bring Islamists to power is a negative aspect of electoral democracy from an exclusionist pro-secular point of view.

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<sup>10</sup> Zakaria, *The Future of Freedom*.

RELIGIOUS NEWSPAPERS				SECULAR NEWSPAPERS			
Hits Liberal Democracy / Hits Electoral Democracy	+	-	n	Hits Liberal Democracy / Hits Electoral Democracy	+	-	n
1996	1.1	1.4	1.3	1996	3.8	<b>0.2</b>	1.1
1997	1.1	1.5	0.6	1997	2.1	<b>0.6</b>	0.8
1998	<b>1.8</b>	1.9	1.5	1998	2.6	2.7	1.1
1999	2.5	1.8	2.2	1999	4.1	2.6	1.3
2000	<b>3.4</b>	4.6	1.5	2000	3.9	2.1	1.3
2001	2.5	2.1	1.6	2001	3.2	<b>0.9</b>	1.4
2002	1.9	1.8	1.5	2002	2.5	<b>0.8</b>	1.0
2003	1.9	2.2	1.2	2003	2.7	<b>0.7</b>	0.9
2004	1.9	0.9	1.2	2004	2.3	<b>0.4</b>	1.1

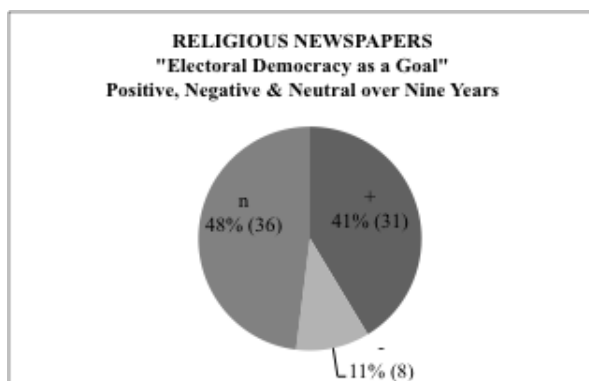
**Table 1.** Electoral vs. Liberal Democracy



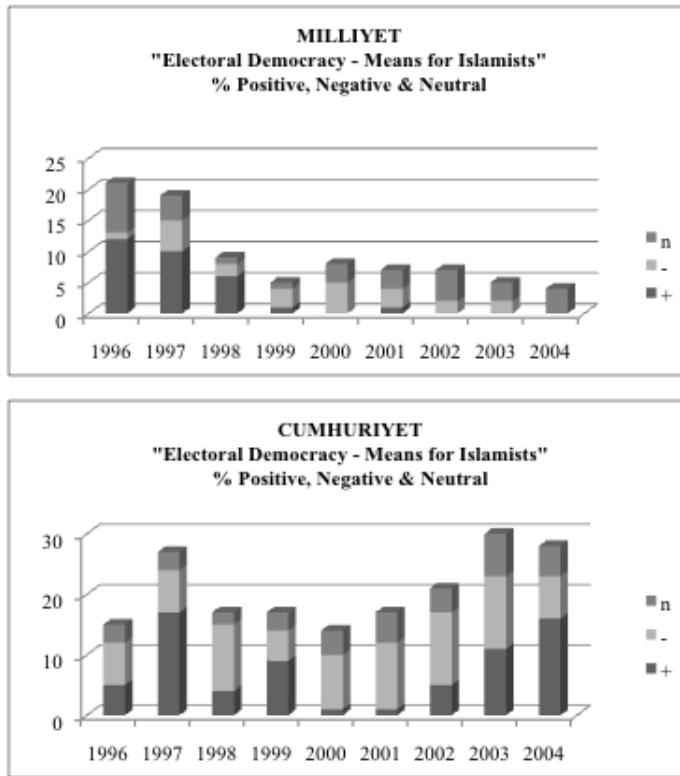
**Figure 1.**

Yet, as Figures 2 and 3 capture, there was considerable skepticism in secular newspapers about Islamists' seeing democracy as a goal rather than as a tool. For example, 57 percent of the codings indicate a disagreement that Islamists may embrace democracy as an end goal. This question was also a bigger part of the discussion in secular newspapers, receiving 7.4 codings per year/newspaper, in comparison to 2.8 codings per year/newspaper in religious newspapers. As for the religious newspapers, only a minority of the codings (8 codings) indicated a disagreement "with democracy as an end goal" over nine years

Furthermore, the idea of electoral democracy being a tool for Islamists received 15 codings per year/newspaper in *Milliyet* and *Cumhuriyet*. The findings reveal a divergence of opinion within secular newspapers. As Figure 3 captures, skepticism (positive codings) decreased in *Milliyet* after the AKP came to power in 2002, while it increased in *Cumhuriyet*. In fact, in 2004, the percentage of negative codings in *Cumhuriyet* reached the same high levels it showed in 1997 when the Islamist RP was in power.



**Figure 2.**



**Figure 3.**

### Social Pluralism

Cross-country research suggests that the main differences of Muslim societies from the rest of the world regard values about social issues. Available survey studies in Turkey also suggest that intolerance of social pluralism (defined as avoidance of people with different ethnic and religious identities and lifestyles as neighbors, colleagues, or marriage partners) tends to be higher among people who consider themselves religious, compared to people who consider themselves not religious.<sup>11</sup>

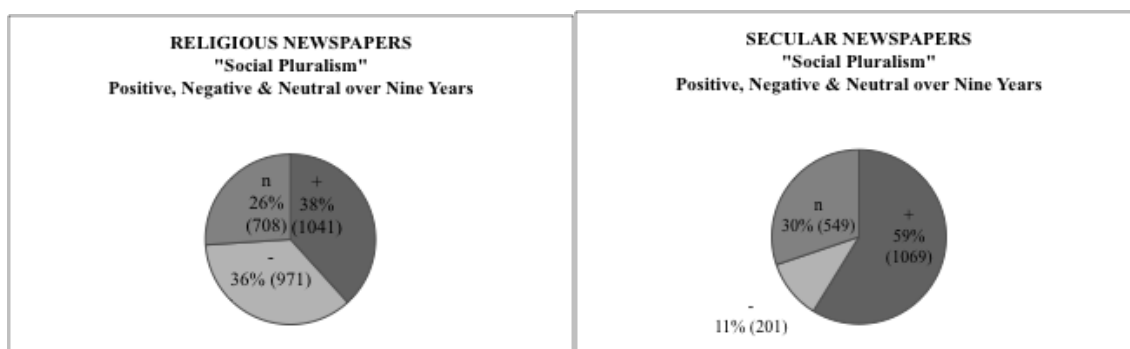
In general, the project's findings are consistent with these observations. The convergence that was observed between religious and secular newspapers with respect to political democracy is not replicated with respect to issues of social pluralism. Religious media actors remain considerably more suspicious of social diversity than secular actors are. Furthermore, the cross-time analyses indicate that a moderate movement toward more positive considerations occurred only in one newspaper, *Yeni Şafak* (Not shown here). However, these observations do not apply to non-Muslim minorities. Regarding non-Muslim minorities, religious media content were relatively more tolerant than the pro-secular media. Only the findings on general (in-group and out-group) social diversity, sexual minorities, and Armenians are shown here.

One of the hypotheses above stated that:

H9. Secular actors are more amenable to social diversity and pluralism than religious actors are.

<sup>11</sup> Ali Çarkoğlu and Binnaz Toprak, *Değişen Türkiye'de Din, Toplum ve Siyaset*, p. 49.

In the content analysis, the category of social pluralism was defined as those “that discuss (or refer to) the diversity of social, cultural, religious, and similar (such as different life styles or different interpretations of a philosophy or religion) groups, the relations between these groups, and the benefits of, or problems caused by, such diversity.” Thus, social pluralism includes questions of ethnic-cultural pluralism, different life-styles, and different interpretations of Islamic teachings and the “good life.” An example could be the coexistence of churches and mosques, different Muslim sects, or secular and religious life styles in the same neighborhood. An article related to the category of social pluralism could contain three types of opinions, or a combination of them. It could contain positive opinions that highlight its benefits, say, cultural exchange; negative opinions that highlight the frictions and losses it creates, say, the country’s loss of a unifying identity; neutral opinions that do not make any manifest value judgments. Figure 4 summarizes the comparison between the religious and secular newspapers.



**Figure 4.**

Thus, H9 is supported by these findings.

Another hypothesis regarded whether religious and secular actors had different standards for pluralism for in-group and out-group members. Examples of in-group and out-group diversity would be the Alevi Muslim minority and Christian Armenians, in respective order..

H11. Religious (secular) actors embrace social pluralism for Muslims (seculars) but not for non-Muslims (unseculars).

Notably, the religious newspapers were as suspicious of differences coming from non-Muslims as they were of intra-Muslim differences. For “in-group pluralism” (among Muslims) the percentage of negative codings, 39 percent, was almost the same as the negative codings for “outgroup pluralism” (non-Muslims), 41 percent. Thus, the source of concern did not seem to be non-Muslimness, but diversity and difference *per se*. For example, the percentage of negative codings for the category “non-mainstream identities and life styles” was 31 percent in religious newspapers, compared to 16 percent in the secular newspapers.

However, although secular actors were more open to social pluralism in general than religious actors were, they were not sympathetic toward social differences emanating from “unsecular” people (*laik olmayanlar*), which according to secular stereotypes may also be understood as being against Turkish secularism (*laiklik*). 59 percent of the codings in *Milliyet* and 65 percent of the codings in *Cumhuriyet* were negative with respect to manifestly unsecular, out-group social pluralism.

Thus, the findings support H11 for seculars but not for Muslims.<sup>12</sup> Religious actors regarded in-group diversity as suspiciously as they regarded out-group (non-Muslim) diversity.

Figures 5 and 6 indicate the comparative contents of pro-secular and religious media on pluralism associated with a sexual (gays) and an ethnic-religious minority (Armenians) in respective order.

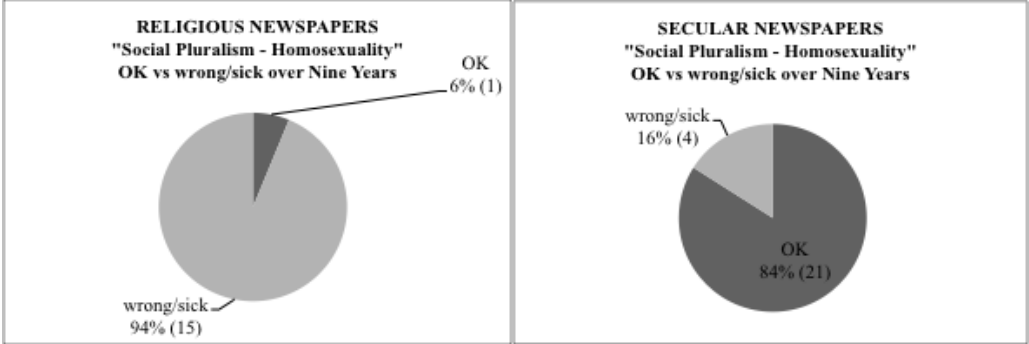


Figure 5.

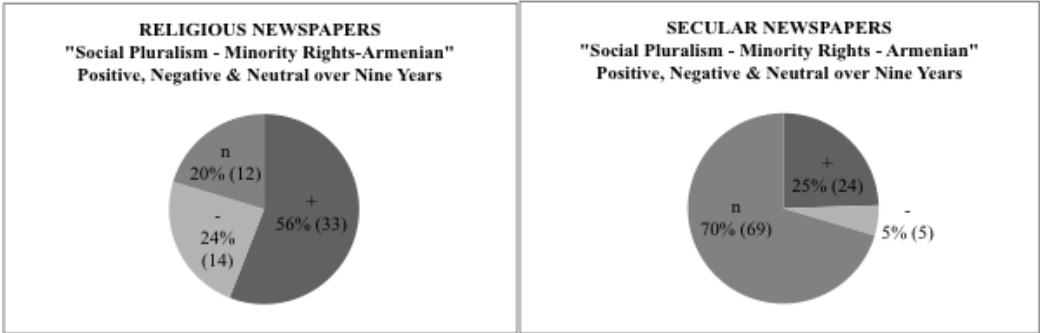


Figure 6.

In accordance with the findings summarized by Figure 6, the AKP took important reconciliatory steps toward Armenians, such as the repair of a major Armenian church of historical-symbolic importance in Lake Van.

**Secularism**

The content analysis did not find any support for the hypothesis

A14. Religious actors have developed more supportive views on secularism.

Figure 9 does not indicate any positive trend toward secularism. Whenever secularism was an issue, it was mostly referred to as a problem, most of the time in the form of a criticism of Turkish secularism. Similar observations were made also during the interviews. For example, the head of an NGO close to the AKP criticized the Constitutional Court for a 2008 ruling in

<sup>12</sup> Note, however, that the meaning of in-group/out-group was not symmetrical for both groups. The “in-group” for Muslims includes “secular” (i.e. not practicing or not religious) Muslims as well as religious Muslims. The out-group consists of non-Muslims only. In the case of secular newspapers, the dividing line between in-group and out-group was secularism (*laik olmak*), the out-group thus including unsecular Muslims as well as non-Muslims.

which it warned the party against supporting anti-secularism, labeling the decision “politicized and biased.” Later in the conversation, however, he argued that “ideally, of course, we would not have secularism.”

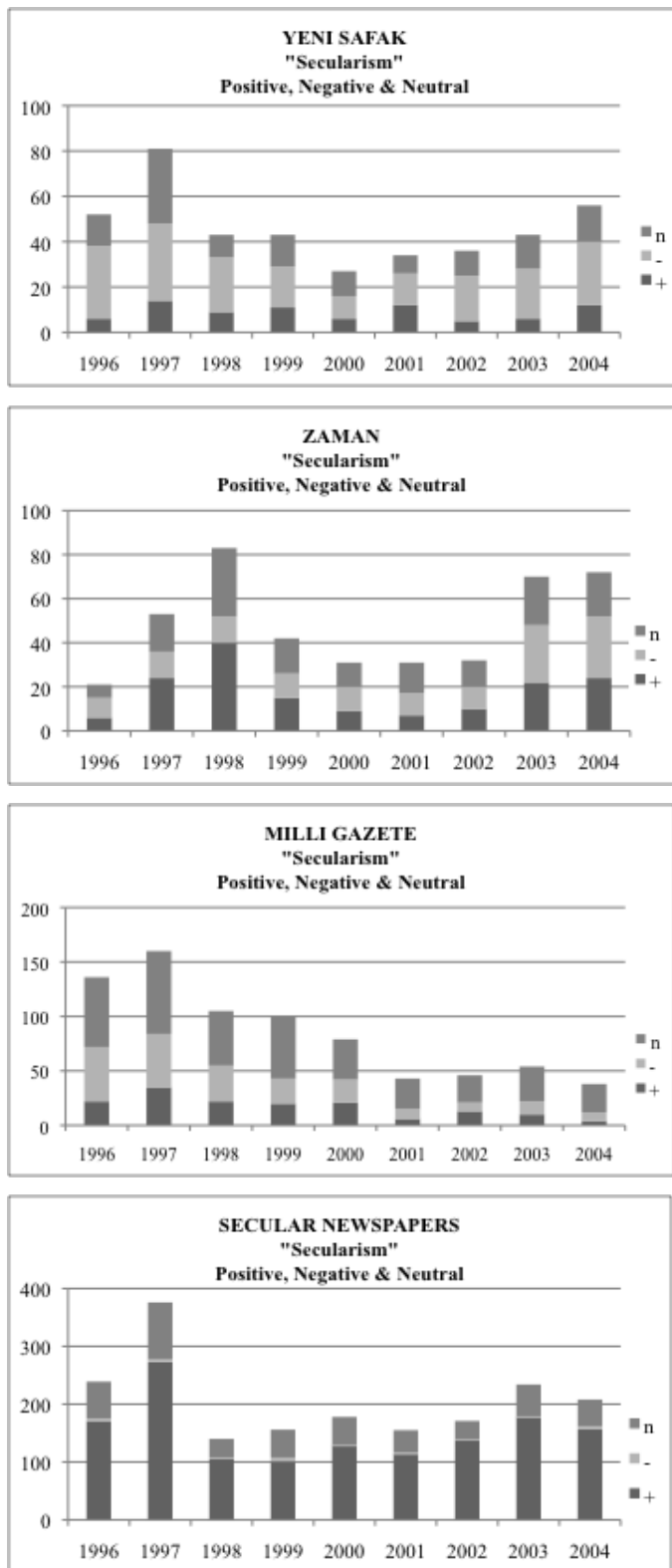


Figure 7.

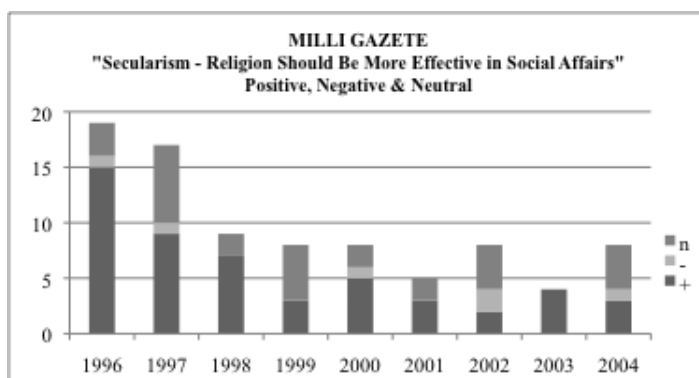
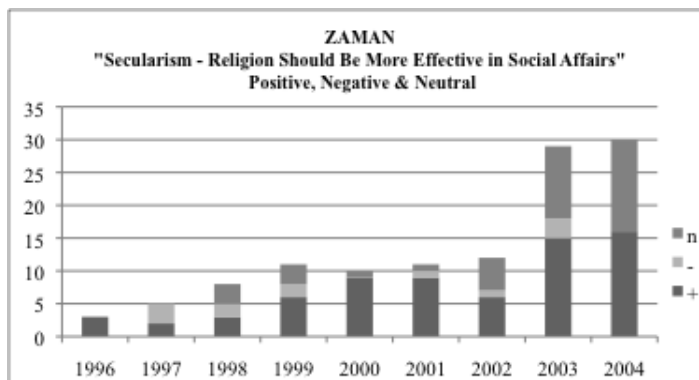
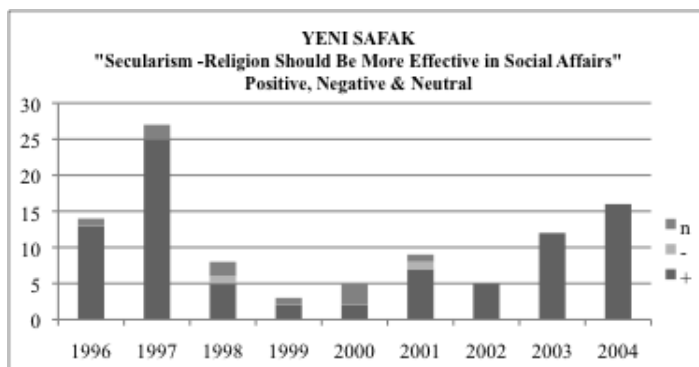
But many religious actors may not oppose secularism *per se*, but Turkish *laicism* that envisages state regulation of religion, as discussed above. In other words, they may be

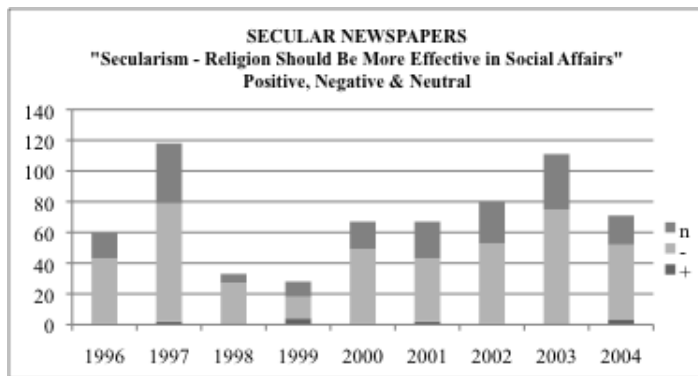
amenable to a different type of secularism. However, how would the religious actors reform Turkish secularism?

Against this backdrop, a major additional source of conflict between secular and religious actors is their diverging understandings of secularism. Since religious actors are critical of secularism in Turkey and would like religion to be less restricted, what type of a role do they desire religion to play under a “better” secular system? The focus is on social affairs. In the context of the question of secularism, there were more codings (304) of the statement “religion should be more effective in social affairs” than the codings (234) of the statement “religion should be more effective in state affairs.” Moreover, twice as many codings (207) were positive for the first statement. Thus, with respect to the hypothesis

A15. Religious actors’ conception of reforming Turkish secularism envisions a greater role for religion in (a) state affairs (b) social affairs.

The findings support A15 (b). In the interest of space, Figure 8 only displays the findings on social affairs.





**Figure 8.**

#### IV. FULFILLMENT OF OBJECTIVES

The project fulfilled the main objective of the project, which was stated in the agreement as “to contribute to knowledge on the impact of electoral politics on political Islam with a focus on the case study of the AKP in Turkey.” It found that the positive impact of electoral democracy is contingent upon the development of pro-democratic value changes among both religious and secular political actors, on the availability of public platforms where such values can be developed, and on the presence of democratic checks and balances in the political system. It fulfilled a major gap in the academic and policy-making debates on the questions of Islam, democracy, and Turkey’s AKP by providing a rich data base that can inform these debates. The data base provides empirical ground on which these debates can take place on a less subjective, and falsifiable, basis. Regarding the specific objectives:

- 1.1. It was found that the AKP’s ideological change was preceded by significant changes in the religious-conservative media content toward a more pro-liberal democracy discourse. The party’s change is not sustainable unless (a) pro-democracy change is complemented by value changes more supportive of social pluralism and of a viable version of secularism (b) pro-secular actors no longer support authoritarian measures “to protect secularism.”
- 1.2. The AKP changed after major value changes among religious-conservative as reflected by the content of the religious-conservative media content.
- 1.3. The political actors representing the AKP changed in three steps triggered by domestic and external dynamics. First, they changed after an authoritarian secularist intervention in electoral politics in 1997, which showed that (a) the rule of law and the freedoms and insurances in a “full democracy” are also valuable for Islamists and (b) the system would not allow openly Islamist, anti-systemic policies. Second, the EU’s recognition of Turkish candidacy for membership triggered a pro-West shift. Third, secularist public campaigns in 2007 triggered the AKP’s illiberal potential, which was predicted by the project and which shows the endogenously of secular and religious actors’ behavior.
- 1.4. The Turkish experience can find application in other predominantly Muslim societies under three conditions. First, prior to elections, the basic institutions of democracy, and a political party system checking and balancing “anti-systemic” political actors need to be in place. Second, public platforms such as a free media where religious and secular elites can contest and deliberate beliefs and values and where pro-democratic value shifts can take place need to be present. Third, external support for democracy such as Turkey’s EU “anchor” is important.



## V. PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION AND MANAGEMENT

The content-analysis consisted of three parts. During the preliminary analysis, first, potential subject categories were constructed deductively based on research interests and based on theories of religion and politics. This state was completed in July-September 2006. Then, one full-time graduate assistant and the author examined around 1,200 randomly selected articles from the target newspapers in order to identify the actual subjects covered and questions discussed in these newspapers. These were then combined with the deductively derived ones to create detailed tables categorizing the different subjects discussed, contending value judgments made, and code words used. This exercise was aimed at addressing the “validity and reliability problems” in the extraction of the subject categories and questions.<sup>13</sup> This stage of the analysis was conducted from October 2006 through March 2007.

The second and main part of the analysis began in April 2007. Twenty part-time undergraduate and graduate coder analysts were recruited through interviews that were aimed at excluding individuals opinionated on the issue of religion and secularism and went through a two-day training period.<sup>14</sup> These coders then content analyzed the newspapers in Istanbul and Ankara libraries by using the same tables, rules and definitions for subject categories. With some interruptions due to technical and financial problems, the main content analysis began in April 2007 and ended in December 2008.<sup>15</sup> In about 4850 newspaper issues, more than 42,463 articles have been found relevant and analyzed. Thus, validity and reliability problems were minimized by covering a large number of issues, distributing the issues among 20 analysts with no consecutive day examined by the same person, and each coder’s employing the same rules and answering the same set of questions while coding the articles.

The third part of the analysis consists of the compilation, and comparative analysis, of the findings, the interpretation of the findings in light of interviews with social-political actors, and the writing and dissemination of scientific material. This process is continuing.

Activities hitherto supported by the project:

1. Literature review.
2. Preliminary Content Analysis. Thorough analysis of 1,100 articles with the support of the principal researcher and a full time graduate assistant who worked three days a week in the Atatürk Library and two days at the university.
3. The organization of two international workshops in May 2007 at Koç University, Istanbul with the participation of 15 academics/scholars from various countries such as Turkey, Canada, Egypt, the US, and Yemen, and 4 members of the IDRC:  “Workshop on Islamist Parties and Constituencies, Domestic and External Mechanisms, and Democratization, Koç University, Istanbul, May 25-26, 2007”  “IDRC-MEGGF (Middle East Good Governance Fund) Meeting, Koç

<sup>13</sup> Jörg Matthes and Matthias Kohring. “The Content Analysis of Media Frames” for reliability and validity problems in framing analyses.

<sup>14</sup> Four undergraduate and sixteen graduate assistants, ten males and ten females.

<sup>15</sup> The technical difficulties and mishaps are explained under the heading “Project Implementation and Management” below.

University, Istanbul, May 27, 2007”
4. The main Content Analysis (April 2006 through October 2008): The recruitment, training, and part-time employment of 20 assistants for content analysis in Istanbul and Ankara.
5. Interviews with eight social and political actors in Istanbul and Ankara. Qualitative content analyses of more than a dozen civil society reports/publications.
6. The scrutiny of the data and the correction and completion of any missing or erroneous parts. Evaluation of the data.
7. The writing of one published academic journal article, two submitted journal articles, three forthcoming book chapters, four opinion pieces published in Turkish daily newspapers, and one book proposal.
8. The evaluation of the data, development of additional hypotheses, and the writing of additional hypotheses. (ongoing).

Problems during the implementation causing delays:

In addition to this enlarged scope of the methodology, two unforeseen developments caused delays in the empirical analysis. First, the major library on which the content analysis depended (Istanbul Atatürk Library) was unexpectedly (announced only in late May 2006) shut down for a renovation project. It was first announced that the repairs would last through the summer but they actually lasted two and a half years. The content analysis continued in other libraries (Istanbul Beyazıt State Library and Basın Müzesi -Press Museum- Library), which had two of the newspapers (*Yeni Şafak* and *Zaman*) to be covered but whose facilities and business hours were significantly more limited. The *Vakit* newspaper was only available in Istanbul in the Atatürk Library. Thus, beginning 2008, the project director and full time assistant went to Ankara to recruit and train a new team of students to do the content analysis there. After the three-day training was completed, it turned out that many issues of the *Vakit* were also missing in the National Library in Ankara, although the library’s official records, which the researchers checked earlier, showed otherwise. At this point it was decided that *Milli Gazete* would be substituted for *Vakit*. The codings for *Milli Gazete* and *Vakit*’s issues that were completed earlier showed that their contents were similar.

## VI. PROJECT OUTPUTS AND DISSEMINATION

### Published Journal Article:

1. “Moderate Islam and Secularist Opposition in Turkey: Implications for the World, Muslims and Secular Democracy,” *Third World Quarterly* 28 (7), pp. 1271-1289 (October 2007)

### Forthcoming Book Chapters:

2. “Toward A Non-Standard Story: The Kurdish Question and the Headscarf, Nationalism, and Iraq,” in Ayşe Kadioğlu and Fuat Keyman, eds, *Symbiotic Antagonisms in Turkey: Sources, Discourses and Changing Nature of Turkish, Kurdish, and Islamic Nationalisms* (Forthcoming, The University of Utah Press)

3. (with Gönül Tol) “New Muslim Pluralism and Secular Democracy in Turkey and the EU,” in Elizabeth Prugl and Markus Thiel, eds., *Diversity in the European Union* (Forthcoming, Palgrave/Macmillan)
4. “The Janus-Faced Relation of Religious Actors and Human Security: Islamic and Secular Values in Turkey” (Forthcoming in Book Project of the Luce Symposium on Religion and Human Security, University of Washington, Seattle, WA)

**Submitted Journal Articles:**

5. “Democracy (for me): Religious and Secular Beliefs and Social and Political Pluralism in Turkey.” February 2009 (Submitted to Brookings-Sabancı International Award).
6. “The Consolidation of Pluralistic Democracy and the Search for „Twin Tolerations’ between Islamic and Secularist Actors.“ March 2009 (Submitted to *Third World Quarterly*)

**Opinion pieces and Lectures to General Public:**

7. "Democracy-Secularism Relationship Revisited," *Today's Zaman*, January 25, 2009
8. "Demokrasi-Laiklik İlişkisini Düşünmek," (Thinking the Democracy-Secularism Relationship) *Taraf*, December 16, 2008
9. "Thinking Laicism," *Today's Zaman*, October 19, 2008
10. "Laikliği Düşünmek Ama Nasıl," (Rethinking Laicism But How), *Taraf*, October 13, 2008
11. “Değişen Türkiye’de Kimlik, Laiklik ve Demokrasi” (Identity, Secularism and Democracy in Turkey in Transformation), Voyvoda Caddesi Toplantıları (Voyvoda Street Meetings), Osmanlı Bankası Center of Archives and Research, İstanbul (February 6, 2008)

**Conference Presentations:**

12. “Islam, Nationalism, and Democracy in Turkey’s Post-2007 Kurdish Conflict,” Middle East Studies Association annual meeting, Washington, DC (November 24, 2008)
13. Lecture, “The Search for „Twin Tolerations’ Between Islamic and Secularist Actors and Institutions In Turkey,” Ghent University, Belgium (November 6, 2008)
14. “Religious Non-State Actors and Secular Democracy: Evidence from Political Islam in Turkey,” the Luce Symposium on Religion and Human Security, University of Washington, Seattle, WA (May 8-9, 2008)
15. “Political Islam, Social and Political Diversity, and Turkey’s EU Membership,” Conference on Diversity and European Integration, Florida International University, Miami, FL (April 1-2, 2008)
16. “Moderation and Sustainable Secular Democracy: Lessons from Political Islam in Turkey,” International Studies Association Annual Convention, San Francisco, CA (March 25-29, 2008)
17. “Sustainable Democratization and Secularism: Lessons from Political Islam in Turkey,” Conference on Islamists and Democrats, The American University of Cairo, Cairo (March 15-16, 2008)
18. “Constituency Values and Sustainable Democratization of Political Islam: Insights from Turkey,” Annual Meeting of the Middle East Studies Association of North America, Montreal (November 16-17, 2007)
19. “Value Change and Sustainable Moderation of Political Islam: Theory and Evidence from Turkey,” Annual Meeting of the Association for the Study of Religion, Economics, and Culture (ASREC), Tampa, FL (November 2-4)

20. "When is Democratization Sustainable? Lessons from Political Islam in Turkey," American Political Science Association Annual Meeting, Chicago, IL (August 30-Sept. 2, 2007)

#### **Briefings/Presentation to Canadians:**

21. Lecture, "Turkish Politics: Secularism and Democracy in A Changing World," Society for International Development, Ottawa, Canada (June 11, 2008)
22. "The Development of Political Islam and Democracy in Turkey," seminar on Political Party Development and Democracy in the Middle East, International Development Research Centre, Ottawa (November 21, 2007)
23. Briefing on the AKP by the principal researcher for nine foreign ambassadors and embassy representatives in a meeting organized by the Canadian Consulate in Ankara, (July 9, 2007)

#### **Book Proposal**

24. Democracy (for me): Religion, Pluralism and Democracy in Turkey. December 2008.

### **VII. CAPACITY BUILDING**

1. By building on the principal researcher's previous work and existing literature on content analysis, and by utilizing the preliminary content analysis and the experiences during the training of the assistants, the project has made possible the development of an original method of content analysis, which can be employed toward identifying ideological moderation of any social-political group as reflected in newspapers and civil society reports.

This new method can be used in the future projects of the principal researcher as well as that of others, especially but not exclusively in the predominantly Muslim countries of the Middle East.

2. The project's implementation, for example the organization of the content analysis, the administration of the funds, and the organization of the international conferences, has improved the research and administration skills of the people involved in the project. It has also contributed to the International Relations Department of Koç University.
3. The project has funded and made possible the training and employment of a highly motivated team of twenty undergraduate and graduate students who conducted the content analysis and otherwise work in the project. These young researchers are going through a unique learning experience. They are exposed to systematic research techniques and are learning how to use them. Even more importantly, however, they gain unique insights into the intellectual discussions that have been going on within the Islamic-conservative constituencies in Turkey, an ideological and intellectual world from which the majority of Turkish university students, and, for that matter, Turkish intelligentsia, separate themselves. They thus cross mental-intellectual divisions that are dividing the Turkish society and politics. They turned into a closely-knit group willing to help the project on every level. Thus they build a unique type of social capital. I expect them to employ this knowledge and capital in future academic, civil society, and political projects that would contribute to democratization vis-à-vis religion and secularism in Turkey.

## **IX. IMPACT**

Polarization between religious and pro-secular social and political actors is a major problem of Turkey's political and economic development. Underlying this polarization are mutual misgivings and suspicions that are often based in misperceptions, preconceptions, or lack of knowledge about the "others." Accordingly, each group often views itself as a disadvantaged minority oppressed by the other and thus views itself as entitled to ignore the other group's legitimate concerns and fears. Pro-secular actors perceive themselves as under threat from a religious-conservative majority insufficiently respecting democracy and secular freedoms, and overlook religious people's legitimate problems such as the restrictions on religious headgear in public places. Religious actors perceive themselves as under threat from secular actors and institutions insufficiently respecting democracy and religious freedoms, and overlook secular people's legitimate concerns such as religious pressures on secular lifestyles and freedom of thought.

The project has produced a rich set of valuable information that can be used to dispel some of these mutual misperceptions. Thus, these debates can be conducted on a more rational and constructive basis. Similarly, the project's contribution to a better understanding of the relative moderation of Turkish political Islam contributes to democratization in other majority-Muslim societies. These positive effects will be fully realized when all of the project outputs are published and disseminated to the academic community and larger public. In the long run, one plan is to make the data set and results available to the public through a web site.

## **X. OVERALL ASSESSMENT**

In addition to its reach and impact already realized through its outputs listed above, the project is expected to bear a long-term reach and impact that will be realized for years to come.

## **XI. RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that the projects' main findings from different cases are collected and published in a comparative policy report, or book.