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**The "West" in Turkish Political Islam**

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**Introduction**

This paper analyzes the continuities and changes in the discourse of Islamist parties regarding the West in Turkey. More specifically, the paper maps out the discourse of two main parties of political Islam on USA and Europe between 2001 and 2007, namely Justice and Development Party (the AKP) and the Felicity Party (the SP). The reason for choosing these two parties is that they are the representatives of Islamist politics in Turkey. Although the AKP leadership refuses to be labeled as Islamist, the fact that the AKP cadres has emerged from the SP in 2001 leads many analysts to treat it as an Islamist party.<sup>1</sup>

Comparing the two parties is promising in several respects. First of all, Turkey offers a unique laboratory for studying whether and how Islam and the West can coexist: Turkey is the only predominantly Muslim country that has an experience of a multiparty democracy since early 1950s with a strong secular political tradition. On the other hand, enduring secular political institutions face a challenge with the rise of political Islam since the early 1990s. The accommodation of (or failure to accommodate) this challenge in the democratic system has implications for Islam not only in Turkey but also globally. As the Turkish experience is an

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<sup>1</sup> Most of the AKP delegates and party members have been the members of SP and the in-party opposition came together under the AKP. For a detailed analysis of foundation of the AKP and its relationship with the SP see, Y. Akdoğan, ‘Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi {Justice and Development Party}’ in Tanil Bora and Murat Gültekinil (eds.) *İslamcılık {Islamism}* Istanbul:İletişim Yayınları, 2005.

opportunity to reveal the characteristics of Islamist politics, this can be a model for other Muslim countries. This point of view indeed is frequently expressed by many Turkish and global actors. Furthermore, Turkey is negotiating full membership in the European Union. The fact that Turkey will be the first dominantly Muslim country of the EU compels European actors to decide whether or not the EU is a “Christian Club”. Secondly, comparison of these parties provides the opportunity to observe the changes and continuities within the Islamist movement regarding its attitude towards the West. Lastly, such a comparison reveals the differences between moderate and more conservative Islamist actors.

The paper starts with a clarification of the concepts of “Islamist” and “West/ Westernization” in Turkish political context. Under the light of this discussion, the paper examines the discourse of two Islamist parties in Turkey, the AKP and the SP with respect to their perceptions of West, more specifically USA and the EU. Following the discourse analysis of each party, paper examines the differences and similarities on their conception of the West and of whether these two parties perceive the USA differently from the European countries.

### **General Features of Political Islam in Turkey**

Most students of Turkish politics would agree that one of the main political cleavages in Turkey is secular vs. Islamist politics. In Turkey’s constitutional structure it is illegal to argue for changing the regime based on Islam/the Holy Koran. Therefore, in this paper “Islamist or political Islam” means those political movements which seek conservative changes in the legal structure or socio-political institutions, but not in the constitutional structure. Therefore, the paper leaves out illegal militant Islamist movements which aim to change the constitutional structure of the country. In this context, Islamist parties favor more appearance of religion in public life while the secularist actors favor preserving of secular character of the state strictly and continue the modernization/Westernization efforts of the early Republican elite. Each group has its own hardliners and moderates.

Academic interest<sup>2</sup> in the Islamist-Secular cleavage has been growing since the rise of political Islam in mid-1990s. Although Islamists have entered the political game in 1970s

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<sup>2</sup> Political Islam in Turkey has attracted a considerable amount of attention from researchers. Recent collection of *Islamiçilik* {Islamism} edited by Tanil Bora and Murat Gultekingil comprises chapters examining various issues of political Islam in Turkey. Among them, N. Mert’s analysis provides historical background of Islamist

with Necmettin Erbakan's the MNP (the National Order Party) and the MSP (the National Salvation Party), it was the 1994 local elections that gave a shock to secularist actors. Before 1994, political Islam in Turkey has played a marginal role, at most participating in the coalition governments. However, each party<sup>3</sup> established under the leadership of Mr. Necmettin Erbakan has increased its vote percentages<sup>4</sup> steadily at almost every election since mid-1990s.

The Islamist movement in Turkey has sought two modes of political representation, by a conservative faction in the center right parties and secondly, by their own party with a specific agenda since 1970. Currently, the Islamist political parties in Turkey are split into two: the “*National View*” line of veteran political leader Necmettin Erbakan represented under the SP and the AKP under the leadership of Recep Tayyip Erdogan. As mentioned before, the AKP emerged from the former and it brought a dramatic shift of ideology and policies from the earlier movement.

**The SP** was founded as the new party of “National View”, following the decision of Constitutional Court to close down the FP in 2001 on the grounds of breaching secularism principle. Like their predecessors, the SP largely represents religiously conservative Sunnis, who are mainly small traders and artisans of the hinterland. The Islamist character of the SP is easy to identify from its discourse on religion. The language used by the leadership, even the names of the successive parties, has some connotation to religious values.<sup>5</sup> Such symbolism becomes significant, as there is a continuing battle of values between Islamists and secularists. More evidently, party ideology is named as “National View”, which was formulated by Mr.

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movement. “*Türkiye İslamcılığında Tarihsel Bir Bakış {A Historical View of Turkish Islamism}*” in Tanil Bora and Murat Gultekin (eds.) *İslamcılık {Islamism}* Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2005.

<sup>3</sup> Depending on whether or not he is banned from political action, Erbakan openly or behind the scenes led five succeeding parties, which are campaigning for more or less the same agenda. Parties under his leadership are as follows: the MNP (the National Order Party) 1970-1971; the MSP (the National Salvation Party) 1972-1981; the RP (the Welfare Party) 1983-1998; the FP (the Virtue Party) 1997-1999; and lastly the SP (the Felicity Party) 1999- to present. The reason for founding so many parties is that four of his parties were either ousted from government by the military or closed down by the Constitutional Court, on the grounds of breaching the secularism principle. Each closure was followed by the establishment of a new party -apparently heir to the previous one- either by Erbakan himself or his loyalists. In other words, the same Islamist party has endured, albeit under different names, since 1970. I. Gurleyen, *Impact of EU Political Conditionality on Democratization: Turkey*. PhD diss. University of Siena, 2005, p. 113-114.

<sup>4</sup> The voting percentages of consecutive Islamist parties are as follows: in 1973 11.8 %, in 1977 8.5 %, in 1978 11.8 %, in 1987 7.1 %, in 1991 16.8 %, in 1995 21.3 %, in 1999 15.4 %, and in 2002.

<sup>5</sup> Refah means “welfare”, Fazilet means “virtue” and Saadet is an old mode of saying “happiness” or “felicity”.

Erbakan. “National View” evolves around Islamic idioms and symbols such as “just order”<sup>6</sup>, which is a criticism of capitalist socio-economic order and suggests establishing a new economic order based on Islamic ethical norms such as creation of an interest free economic order but without specific policy propositions to realize such rhetoric.

As an anti-system party, the RP was clearly distinguished from other mainstream political parties. Such policies, actually, formed the basis of the rulings of Constitutional Court to close down both the RP and the FP in 1998 and in 2001 respectively. The criticism of the party directed against secular characteristics of the Turkish state and the regime’s modernization/westernization efforts have been quite explicit until mid-1990s. However, starting from the experience in power in 1995, the party leadership gradually ceased talking about just order and the emphasis moved on to allowing the use of religious symbols in the public sphere, such as allowing female students to use headscarves at universities. These demands are essentially in conflict with the secular rules of public order. “Just Order”

The closure of the SP in 1998 has put another impetus for the leadership to be more attentive on the issue of secularism. Prominent figures of the party both tried to keep their electoral base by limiting their criticisms on “rights” bases and not arguing for a change of regime in Turkey. Nevertheless, this shift in the party discourse does not change the fact that secular establishment believed that the RP/FP/SP is an anti-system party having an agenda for “Islamic rights”. Even the limited arguments of the party were perceived as a threat to secularism and the change in party discourse is seen as a mask to hide their real agenda<sup>7</sup> to change the secular system in Turkey.<sup>8</sup>

The SP participated in the November 2002 elections but did not get the 10 % of votes to gain seats in the parliament. Many factors may have had a role in the decline in party votes but three stands out. The first relates to the disappointment of voters with the government experience of predecessors the SP (the RP and the FP). The RP in power did not provide a

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<sup>6</sup> For further explanations of just order see, Yildiz, 2003, pp: 192; Mecham, 2004, pp: 342.

<sup>7</sup> “Hidden Agenda” (takiye in Turkish) is quite significant in Turkish political context. All the Islamist parties including the AKP are accused of using democratic means in order to come to power while hiding their real aim (i.e. to establish a state on Islamic rules) until it has been achieved.

<sup>8</sup> I. Gurleyen., *Impact of*, p: 114-117.

solution to ongoing economic problems, nor was the FP strong enough to defend the “rights” promised during the election campaigns. Secondly, the split within the party led to the establishment of a new party by the reformist group, the AKP. The competition for more or less the same constituency resulted in favor of the latter.

**The AKP**, founded by reformist members of the FP/the SP aspires to distance itself from the label of Islamist, at least to an extent and aims to be recognized as “conservative democrats” of Turkish politics. The fact that it was established relatively recently (in 2001) and the political past of the leadership in the SP weakened any argument of the AKP’s ideology. Although the party is relatively young, many of its leaders are well-known as they had been prominent figures of political Islam in Turkey. As mentioned earlier, the younger and more moderate members of the pro-Islamist movement have first tried to take the leadership of the RP/FP/SP. Being unsuccessful reformists Mr. Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Mr. Abdullah Gul have established the AKP. In 2002, taking the 32 % of votes it became the first party at the polls, with Mr. Gül first as the prime minister, and then Mr. Erdogan after his political ban ended. For the first time in almost two decades, the AKP ended up forming a single-party government and became the second overtly pious Muslim ruling party in Turkish history after the RP. Its election success again came as a big surprise to many other political parties, civilian and military bureaucracy, and civil-societal actors.

Since the days of preparations of formation, the AKP leadership refuses to be labeled as "Islamist" and claims that it is a pro-Western mainstream party with a "conservative" social agenda but also a firm commitment to liberal market economy and Turkey’s EU membership. In their words, they are “Conservative Democrats”, equivalent to “Christian Democrats” in Europe, entitled to represent the four political tendencies, as did the ANAP in 1980s. The party leadership has shown substantial effort to prove that the party does not have a hidden agenda to convert the secular regime to a Islamic state based on Koran rules. However, it has not been easy for the AKP to convince actors both in Turkey and in the world as its cadres are deeply rooted in political Islam. Against such suspicions, the AKP leadership has argued that they have changed; they have acknowledged the secular sensitivity in Turkey.

Even if the leadership is more moderate than the grassroots, casting doubts on what the leadership will do in the case of pressure from hardliner Islamists, within and outside the party. As a consequence, based on limited experience, the AKP can be seen as a secular actor, despite its socially conservative worldview. Many analysts agree that the party leadership has changed and this change accounts for the success of the party to win the 2004 local elections and the July 2007 national elections (with 47 % of total votes). As in the words of Meham, “strategic decisions made by party leadership after periods of political learning have transformed the dominant Islamist movement in Turkey into a politically sophisticated, progressive and moderate participant in normal politics. In the process, religious preferences have not been abandoned, but have been reframed to engage the political regime on its own terms. This transformation has occurred over time thanks to the convergence of multiple factors. They include strategic interaction in a political system that rewards political entrepreneurship, the presence of robust institutional constraints on the Islamist movement’s behavior (judicial, military, civil society), and incentives for the movement to provide costly signals about its intentions, making its moderation self-enforcing. This moderating transformation occurred.”<sup>9</sup>

Contrary to the scandalous governing style of Erbakan, Erdogan has opted for gaining the consensus of the opposition party, the CHP especially on the issues of great importance such as Iraqi invasion by USA and EU membership. Another evidence the party shows for its center right characteristics is their tremendous support for EU membership. Actually, since its establishment the party leadership has based the whole of its discourse around EU membership and the necessary reforms to be taken in that direction. In their election platforms, they declared, “the relations with the European countries will be high importance in the foreign policy agenda of Turkey.” Furthermore, the party leaders promise “to realize the conditions for the membership in the Union, which were demanded from the other candidates as well”. (AKP Election Platform, November 2002 and July 2007).

### **The West Perception of Political Islam in Turkey**

Anti-West discourse is cross-cutting many Turkish political movements: Socialists, Nationalist-Conservatives, Islamists, and sometimes, paradoxically, secular Kemalist state

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<sup>9</sup> Meham, 2003, p. 340.

elite. However, it should be underlined that in some of these movements anti-Western attitude is incidental, while others pursue a consistent anti-West discourse. As Tanıl Bora argues, even though secularist elite (who are the leading pro-Western actors<sup>10</sup>) engage in an anti-West discourse occasionally, the nationalist-conservative and Islamist discourse has a consistent anti-West discourse. For nationalist-conservatives Westernization is nothing more than imitating the West.<sup>11</sup>

In this section, discourses of the two political parties regarding the West will be revealed. Data for the discourse analysis is collected from the official web sites of these two parties and statements appearing in two national dailies of Turkey, which are regarded as close to political Islam, namely the Zaman and the Yeni Şafak. Furthermore, the websites of the parties have been examined to find relevant speeches, press releases of party leadership, or political aides of the leadership, especially those who are responsible for external relations. Although the data covers the period of 2001-2007, the particular emphasis is given to the comments of party leaders regarding critical issues regarding the West, such as “Alliance of Civilizations”, Pope’s visit to Turkey, Turkey’s EU membership, “caricature crisis in Denmark”, “invasion of Iraq”, “Pope’s comments on Prophet Mohammad”, and “Israeli-Palestinian conflict”. Each of these critical events has required party leaders to comment on the West, positively or negatively.

### **Discourse of the SP (the Felicity Party)**

“Anti-Westernism” has been the second most important theme of party discourse, following the Islamist values. First of all the SP leadership complains about the double-standards of Western powers towards Muslims. On the issue of alliance of civilizations, vice president of the SP asks the AKP leader Erdogan, who is co-president of the alliance of civilizations, what happened to the democracy, human rights and peace promises for Middle East. “*They promised to bring democracy to Middle East? What happened? Why can’t they accept the election results in Palestine? Westerners prefer rulers who accept to be enslaved by them, cooperative ones.*”<sup>12</sup> In another document, vice president of the SP states that “*West perceives itself as superior and imposes its so called values. (...) West applies double standards*

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<sup>10</sup> The West and Westernization in Turkey is identified with secular state elite. See, T.Z. Tunaya, *Türkiye’nin Siyasi Hayatında Batılılaşma Hareketleri* İstanbul: Bilgi Üniversitesi, 2004

<sup>11</sup> T. Bora 2007, p.252

<sup>12</sup> [www.saadet.org.tr](http://www.saadet.org.tr) February 15, 2006.

*particularly against Muslims.*” Then, he gives the example of IRA among others emphasizing no one has talked about Catholic terrorism even though IRA has committed terrible crimes. He sees a clear double standard against Muslims in London terrorist attacks as there are prejudices against Muslims and they are associated with terrorism.<sup>13</sup>

In the SP’s election platform, it is stated that *“imperialist powers started 20<sup>th</sup> Crusade in 1990. (...) Zionist racist imperialism said it is time for us to establish Greater Israel ...”*<sup>14</sup> In the rest of the document the party leaders try to give evidence either by making quotations from Western leaders such as Margaret Thatcher or from cases such as Afghanistan, invasion of Iraq, Israeli-Palestinian conflict, etc. The government party (the AKP) is blamed as collaborator of such Western intrigues, and the opposition is blamed as overlooking the facts.<sup>15</sup> In short, the party is asking voters to trust the SP as the true defender of interests of Turks and Muslims.

Danish caricature crisis also resulted in the SP leadership’s strong reaction. They have organized a demonstration protesting the incident. *“Caricature crisis which started in Denmark and spreading to other Western countries is an expression of hatred pumped against Islam.”*<sup>16</sup> *“At first glance it looks shameful individual act; nevertheless it is a reflection of a mentality which is highly followed in the West. People who have this mentality perceive themselves and their civilization as the center. They divide the people as us and others. They perceive themselves superior. (...) Those who have this mentality in the West have exploited the earth for the last four centuries. (...) Shameless who is the representative of this mentality has [drawn this caricature].”* Yet, the SP leadership needs to distance themselves from militant reactions by warning their supporters to be balanced in their reactions *“We don’t accept that all Westerners have the same mentality.”*<sup>17</sup>

Regarding the party’s reaction to the USA the main criticism of the SP leadership is related to the Middle East. US Administration’s policies regarding Iraq, Israeli-Palestinian conflict and particularly Israel’s bombing of Lebanon have been the main issues of criticism. According to

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<sup>13</sup> [www.saadet.org.tr](http://www.saadet.org.tr) July 21, 2005.

<sup>14</sup> Election Platform of the SP, July 2007, p. 2.

<sup>15</sup> *ibid.* p. 21.

<sup>16</sup> [www.saadet.org.tr](http://www.saadet.org.tr) February 15, 2006.

<sup>17</sup> [www.saadet.org.tr](http://www.saadet.org.tr) February 9, 2006.

party leadership all of these are related to each other and actually they are part of larger plan, which serves to establish a larger Israeli state in the Middle East. USA is blamed to tilt the balance always in favor of Israel and party leadership argues that Zionists rule the USA.<sup>18</sup>

Consistent with its “anti-West” discourse, the SP had repeated its anti-EU membership position on many occasions since 2002. It is interesting to note that the SP justifies its anti-EU stance on the EU actors’ *unfair* attitude towards Turkey. That is to say the party’s negative position is not a principled rejection based on Turkish characteristics, rather it is a reaction to the EU actors for not treating Turkey fairly. The title of a report published on the website of the party on December 1, 2004 is “*The Real Face of the EU Progress Report Turkey and Its Hidden Traps*”. The report tells some secret activities of EU member states in Turkey which aim dismemberment or weakening of Turkey. This anti-EU attitude is repeated in other party documents such as a press release titled “No to Second Sevres!”. In this document, the SP leadership expresses the secret purposes of the West: “*The West doesn’t want a strong Turkey for a historically in this region. (...) Thus, the West either takes steps that prevent strengthening of Turkey, or makes other actors to take such steps, or supports actors which take such measures. (...) Turkey is rapidly led towards disintegration. Each and every attempt to this aim is either carried out by Western countries or supported by these countries.*”<sup>19</sup>

Although the EU and the USA are usually mentioned separately in party documents sometimes they are mentioned together under the term ‘West’ implying that there are not many differences between them. Actually in the discourse of the SP, Israel, European countries and the USA all appear as if they belong to the same group. This kind of monolithic group is treated as if they are acting harmoniously against Muslim and Turkish interests.

### **Discourse of the AKP (the Justice and Development Party)**

Emerging from a strongly anti-West tradition one might expect the AKP to continue at least partially an anti-West discourse. On the other hand, it may well be argued that reformist elite within the RP/FP/SP that established the AKP have seen the mistakes of the former experience and followed a pro-Western discourse. Such a position is more converging with one of the main objective of the party which is starting the accession negotiations with the

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<sup>18</sup> See press release of vice president of party, Mr. Temel Karamollaoglu on April 20, 2004 at [www.saadet.org.tr](http://www.saadet.org.tr).

<sup>19</sup> [www.saadet.org.tr](http://www.saadet.org.tr) February 05, 2005.

EU. What is more the AKP followed a foreign policy in line with Turkey's traditional Western alliance and repeated the importance of strategic alliance with the USA.

One of the main themes one which the AKP has established its foreign policy is the dialogue between the civilizations. Turkey under the government of AKP has become one of two countries leading dialogue between religions, between civilizations. United Nations has launched an initiative, co-sponsored by the Prime Ministers of Spain and Turkey, for an Alliance of Civilizations that aims improving cross-cultural understanding<sup>20</sup> AKP leaders have used this theme in their discourses regularly. Already in 2002 the AKP leader Mr. Erdogan states that *"We want the EU to be the address of meeting of civilizations. Turkey's inclusion in the EU will be an evidence of meeting of civilizations. (...) We say that 'decide for compromise between the civilizations not for clash of civilizations'"*.<sup>21</sup> Erdogan also sees Turkey is a model to avoid Islam-West clash and accordingly Turkey will be the democratic model for Muslim countries.<sup>22</sup>

However, the West discourse of the AKP is not free of criticism. There is still to an extent perception of the West as a monolithic entity similar to the discourse of the SP. To start with, the AKP perceives a unfair treatment of Middle East by major Western actors. The party has invited the leader of Hamas to Turkey which caused strong reactions in the US Administration. The AKP stepped back however, they continued to find alternative solutions to Israeli-Palestinian conflict than that of isolation of Hamas, yet unsuccessfully. Fatih Atik, in his column regarding Israel's bombings of Lebanon states that Mr Erdogan has emphasized the double standards of the West by quoting him asking *"where is humanity where is human rights where is advanced democracy"*.<sup>23</sup>

Nevertheless, West criticisms of the AKP are much more balanced in comparison to that of the SP. For instance, on the Danish caricature crisis, Mr. Erdogan states that *"It is not fair that an arrogant caricaturist to attack to the Prophet Mohammed, yet violence is not the way to correct this mistake. Solution is not possible with guns. This [armed conflict] is the desire of*

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<sup>20</sup> For more information see <http://www.unaoc.org>.

<sup>21</sup> Milli Gazete Daily, December 11, 2002.

<sup>22</sup> Milliyet Daily, July 3, 2003.

<sup>23</sup> Zaman Daily, July 21, 2006.

*those who support clash of civilizations.*”<sup>24</sup> Regarding the Pope’s comments on the Prophet Mohammed, Mr. Erdogan criticizes the Pope that he is contradicting efforts of dialogue between civilizations and expects an apology from him: “*The (...) assessment against Islam religion, which means peace and against its prophet is sincerely misfortunate in a period when dialogue between religions, dialogue between civilizations dialogue between values has started in the world. It is not possible for us to accept this. It is not possible for Muslim world to accept it. I think it is not possible for Christian world, Catholic world of common-sense to accept it. (...) I believe the Pope should apologize from the Muslim world.*”<sup>25</sup> Mr. Erdogan did not want to meet the Pope, giving the excuse that he had to be abroad to participate the NATO summit on the same dates. However, following the strong criticism from opposition parties that he didn’t want to appear in the same picture with the Pope for not risking its constituency, which is basically conservative.<sup>26</sup> Whether or not these comments were true, the prime minister met with the Pope briefly at the airport with the last minute changes.

The then Minister of Foreign Affairs (as he is elected as the President of the Republic on 29 August 2007) Abdullah Gul expresses the uneasiness of his party regarding the Western prejudices about Muslims and he sees the Pope’s visit as an opportunity to overcome these prejudices in the Christian world. Mr Gul states that they (AKP leadership) want this visit to be successful and they expect that this visit will “*We hope that Pope’s visit will be an opportunity to eliminate the misunderstandings between Muslims and Christians. I believe that eliminating the misunderstandings will eradicate the prejudices on Muslims living in the Western world, in the USA, in Europe. From this point of view we find the visit as significant.*”<sup>27</sup>

Regarding the Western prejudices against Muslims and Islam there is another theme that the AKP included in their discourse that is Muslim women. On the role of Islam in women development issues, Mr. Erdogan criticizes the Western perception about the place of Muslim women in their societies. According to Erdogan it is oversimplification to see the religion as

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<sup>24</sup> Yeni Safak Daily, February 6, 2006.

<sup>25</sup> Yeni Safak Daily, September 16, 2006.

<sup>26</sup> Zaman Daily, November 28, 2006.

<sup>27</sup> Zaman Daily, November 26, 2006.

one of the causes of gender problems in Muslim societies; rather the traditions are real causes.<sup>28</sup>

As this section reveals, the AKP has been a pro-Western party and during crisis moments between Islam and West, they have been more moderate in its criticism in comparison to the SP. Contrary to the SP, the AKP uses a monolithic West rarely in its discourse. In the party leaders speeches the USA and the EU and other Western countries are mentioned as separate countries. Differences between two parties' positions can be explained by a variety of factors. One of them is the experience in government as member of the RP/FP, the AKP leadership learned the disadvantages of the anti-Western discourse and they acknowledge secularist actors' sensitivities. In order to survive as a political actor in Turkish political context they have come to a conclusion that they had to modify their stance on the West, the EU and the USA. Apart from this pragmatic explanation the party leadership have regularly expressed that they have changed.<sup>29</sup> Another factor might be is the pressure of being in government. It is not rare that parties change their radical stances one they are in government. Nevertheless, there are some similarities between the discourses of two parties. One of the main continuity is regarding the prejudices against Muslims in the Western world such as equation of Islam to terrorism and unfair Western policies in Middle East.

## **Conclusion**

This paper provides a comparison of two Islamist political parties aiming to reveal the changes and continuities in the discourse of Turkish political Islam on West between 2001 and 2007. The major continuity regarding the discourses of the two parties is on the issue of "double standards of Western actors against Muslims in general, against Turkey particularly". There is also substantial uneasiness of AKP actors' speeches regarding the crisis moments between Islam and the West such as Danish caricature crises or the Pope's comments on the Prophet Mohammad.

However, the type of criticism is concentrated more on deviating from 'alliance of civilizations', to which the AKP gives great importance. In other words, the AKP deviated from the SP discourse in the sense that the foreign policy of the AKP is centered on dialogue

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<sup>28</sup> Zaman Daily, November 20, 2006.

<sup>29</sup> For an analysis of changes of party discourses towards EU membership and its reasons see, Gurleyen, 2005.

between Islam and West not the clash of civilizations. In this context, AKP leadership, contrary to the SP, sees Turkey's EU membership as a contribution to peace in the world. While the latter see the West as a monolithic and kind of evil entity in general, the AKP perceives the West in its components and do not generalize the doings of one to others. While the SP has a discourse of *occidentalism*<sup>30</sup> in the sense of opposite *orientalism*, the AKP has a more moderate attitude towards the West. Overall the SP establishes its national identity on a sometimes vulgar discourse of the West, in which the East (Muslims) is seen as superior culturally but trying to protect its soul against the attacks of materialist West.

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<sup>30</sup> I borrowed this label from Bora, 2005.

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