

**THE ISLAMOPHOBIC RHETORIC OF THE TURKISH
OPPOSITION: A DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF PRESS
STATEMENTS FROM OPPOSITION LEADERS
BETWEEN 2013 - 2022**

BY

ASMA ALABED

A dissertation submitted in fulfilment of the requirement for
the degree of Master of Human Sciences in Political Science

AbdulHamid AbuSulayman Kulliyah of Islamic Revealed
Knowledge and Human Sciences
International Islamic University Malaysia

JUNE 2024

ABSTRACT

This research proposes a possible analysis of the use of Islamic rhetoric by secular opposition leaders in Turkey that entrenches Islamophobia through a synthesis of Islamic discourses, political rhetoric, and national interests to influence the dynamic nature of identity construction. This study examines anti-Muslim racism in the discursive elements of secular elites in the opposition through media statements between 2013-2022, which reflects the period after the Gezi Park protests. Critical discourse analysis (CDA) will be used to present potential analyses concerning the dynamics that regulate and discipline Muslim subjects and thoughts in the media. The political function of Islamophobia typically refers to the process of antagonizing Islam and Muslims through anti-Muslim racism and sentiments to produce a Muslim “enemy” that is kept outside the social and political collective. The analysis of the Islamophobic content of the opposition’s messages is the first step to identity-shifting public perception. Still, examining how the Turkish people perceive the phenomenon is crucial to understanding its performative implications. Additionally, the media landscape in Turkey is heavily distorted, biased, and driven by both Islamophobic attitudes and AKP’s political ideology rather than being grounded in the principles of justice, evidence-based analysis, and democratic reform. Political elites in Turkey on both sides of the spectrum must promote inclusive and respectful discourse in the media that focuses on addressing genuine challenges rather than misappropriating Islamic concepts to other conservative parties and Muslims, or in the ruling parties’ case, advancing its political agenda.

Keywords: Islamophobia, political rhetoric, media discourse, secularism, Turkish opposition, Muslim identity

خلاصة البحث

يسعى هذا البحث إلى تقديم دراسة تحليلية لطبيعة استخدام الخطاب الإسلامي من قبل قادة المعارضة العلمانية في تركيا والذي يرسّخ لكرهية الإسلام من خلال توليفة من السجال الإسلامي، والخطاب السياسي، والمصالح الوطنية للتأثير على الطبيعة الديناميكية لبناء الهوية. بحيث تبحث هذه الدراسة في العنصرية المعادية للمسلمين لخطابات النخب العلمانية المعارضة من خلال التصريحات الإعلامية، وذلك من سنة ٢٠١٣ إلى سنة ٢٠٢٢، والتي تعكس الفترة التي تلت احتجاجات حديقة جيزي. سيتم استخدام التحليل النقدي للخطاب في محاولة لتفسير الديناميكيات التي تحكم وتنظم التعامل مع الأفراد المسلمين والفكر الإسلامي في وسائل الإعلام. ويشير التوظيف السياسي للإسلاموفوبيا عادة إلى عملية استعداد الإسلام والمسلمين من خلال العنصرية، والمشاعر المعادية للمسلمين لإنتاج "عدو" مسلم يتم إبقاؤه خارج العقد الاجتماعي والسياسي. ويُمثل تحليل المحتوى المعادي للإسلام في رسائل المعارضة، الخطوة الأولى نحو فهم هذا التحول في الرأي العام، ولكن من المهم أيضاً دراسة نظرة الشعب التركي إلى هذه الظاهرة لفهم تبعات أدها. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، فإن المشهد الإعلامي في تركيا مشوه ومتحيز بشدة، ومدفوع بالمواقف المعادية للإسلام وأيضاً بالأيديولوجيا السياسية لحزب العدالة والتنمية بدلاً من الارتكاز على مبادئ العدالة والتحليل المبني على الأدلة، والإصلاح الديمقراطي. ويتعين على النخب السياسية في تركيا، على جانبي الطيف السياسي أن تعمل على تعزيز خطاب شامل ومحترم في وسائل الإعلام، يركز على معالجة التحديات الحقيقية بدلاً من سوء استخدام المفاهيم بغرض تقييد الأحزاب المحافظة الأخرى والمسلمين، أو في حالة الأحزاب الحاكمة، من خلال تعزيز أجندتها السياسية.

APPROVAL PAGE

I certify that I have supervised and read this study and that in my opinion, it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Master of Human Sciences in Political Science.

.....
Syaza Farhana Mohamad Shukri
Supervisor

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Master of Human Sciences in Political Science.

.....
Bendebka Ramzi
Examiner

This dissertation was submitted to the Department of Political Science and is accepted as a fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Human Sciences in Political Science.

.....
Syaza Farhana Mohamad Shukri
Head, Department of Political
Science

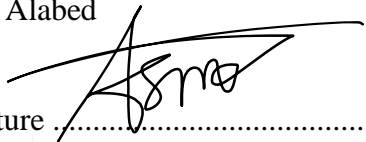
This dissertation was submitted to the AbdulHamid AbuSulayman Kulliyyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences and is accepted as a fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Human Sciences in Political Science.

.....
Shukran Abd Rahman
Dean, AbdulHamid
AbuSulayman Kulliyyah of
Islamic Revealed Knowledge and
Human Sciences

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted as a whole for any other degrees at IIUM or other institutions.

Asma Alabed

Signature 

Date 03/06/2024



INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY MALAYSIA

**DECLARATION OF COPYRIGHT AND AFFIRMATION OF
FAIR USE OF UNPUBLISHED RESEARCH**

**THE ISLAMOPHOBIC RHETORIC OF THE TURKISH
OPPOSITION: A DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF PRESS
STATEMENTS FROM OPPOSITION LEADERS FROM 2013 -
2022**

I declare that the copyright holders of this dissertation are jointly owned by the student and IIUM.

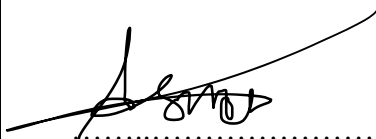
Copyright © 2024 Asma Alabed and International Islamic University Malaysia. All rights reserved.

No part of this unpublished research may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise without prior written permission of the copyright holder except as provided below

1. Any material contained in or derived from this unpublished research may only be used by others in their writing with due acknowledgement.
2. IIUM or its library will have the right to make and transmit copies (print or electronic) for institutional and academic purposes.
3. The IIUM library will have the right to make, store in a retrieval system and supply copies of this unpublished research if requested by other universities and research libraries.

By signing this form, I acknowledged that I have read and understand the IIUM Intellectual Property Right and Commercialization policy.

Affirmed by Asma Alabed




.....

Signature

03/06/2024

.....

Date



This thesis is dedicated to my parents for their patience in my journey back to finally watering the seeds of faith they sowed.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

If the whole ocean were ink for writing the words of my Lord, it would run dry before those words were exhausted' - even if We were to add another ocean to it (18:109).

In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious and the Most Merciful, I begin with praise to the One to whom all praise belongs as fully befits His blessings in our favor. No lifetimes or words will ever suffice in relation to His real glory, and I will always fall short in expressing gratitude to Him for paving the path from Berlin to Malaysia for me.

I am most indebted to my supervisor, Dr. Syaza Shukri, for her endless advice, encouragement, and patience throughout this process. I am deeply grateful to Allah for granting me such a brilliant supervisor who provided inspiring guidance, direction and thorough critique when I needed it most. I am most appreciative. This paper would look entirely different if it were not for her insights.

My gratitude also goes to my family for their duaas and for bearing with me during this research. Their support and light will undoubtedly be one of the heaviest blessings on my scales.

May this be a source of beneficial knowledge for His sake alone, and may His blessings be upon the messengers who came with the truth. Alhamdulillah.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract	ii
Abstract in Arabic	iii
Approval page	iv
DECLARATION	v
Copyright Page	vi
INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY MALAYSIA	vi
Dedication	vii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	viii
Table of contents	ix
List of Tables	xi
CHAPTER ONE	1
INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Introduction.....	1
1.2 Background of the Study	2
1.3 Statement of the Problem.....	4
1.4 Research Questions.....	6
1.5 Research Objectives.....	6
1.6 Significance of Study.....	6
1.7 Literature Review	7
1.7.1 The Role of Modernity, Laïcité, and Islamism in the Construction of Turkish Identity	7
1.7.2 Islamophobia, Secular Nationalism, and the Media.....	13
1.8 Analytical Framework	17
1.9 Methods and Procedures	18
1.10 Chapterization.....	20
CHAPTER TWO	21
THE UTILIZATION OF ISLAMIC RHETORIC BY THE OPPOSITION IN THE MEDIA	21
2.1 Introduction.....	21
2.2 Background of the Table OF Six	22
2.3 Political Rhetoric	24
2.4 Islamophobic Hyperbole.....	25
2.5 Conclusion	32
CHAPTER THREE	34
THE NORMALIZATION OF ISLAMIC RHETORIC ACCORDING TO FOUCAULT’S THEORY OF POWER	34
3.1 Introduction.....	34
3.2 Normalization of Power.....	35
3.3 Turkish-Muslim Identity.....	37
3.4 Role of the Media	39
3.5 Polarized Power Relations	43
3.6 Conclusion	44
CHAPTER FOUR	46
THE AFFECT OF ISLAMIC RHETORIC ON NATIONAL INTERESTS ..	46
4.1 Introduction.....	46
4.2 National Interest.....	46

4.3 National Interests and Islam	48
4.4 Refugee Migration and Non-Interference.....	49
4.5 Opinion Polls and Vote Share.....	51
4.6 Conclusion	54
CHAPTER FIVE.....	57
CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION	57
5.1 Introduction.....	57
5.2 Summary.....	57
5.3 Discussion and Limitations.....	64
REFERENCES.....	65



LIST OF TABLES

Table 4.1 Vote Share Results of Opinion Polls and Elections in Turkey from the Years 2015-2019

53



CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This proposal presents a possible analysis of the use of rhetoric by secular opposition leaders in Turkey that entrenches Islamophobia in an already fractured society. Despite the growing scholarly interest in Islamophobia and its relation to epistemic racism, it has seldom been examined in Muslim-majority nations, including Turkey, where an Islamist party has ruled since 2002. One reason for the scholarly neglect is because of the obvious fact that Muslims make up the majority of Turkey. However, Islamophobia is not strictly defined by a majority-minority relation. Rather, Islamophobia is also about power and “Islamophobia in the form of epistemic racism is as much existent within Islamic discourses that are based on a Eurocentric outlook of the world” (Bayraklı & Hafez, 2019). Therefore, the regulation of Islam in Muslim-majority nation-states has translated into regulating an Islamic identity that conforms to the formation of a modern nation-state subject, regardless of whether Muslims are the minority or majority. Islamophobia is then better understood as a form of epistemic racism where modern nation-state world views are favored instead of Islamic normative perspectives. Understandably, this is a complex process that differs from Muslim state to state, and the structural dismantling of the sharia by colonialist Europe varies greatly. For example, in a non-colonized country like Turkey, secularized Muslim elites gave rise to the European modern nation-state model both in practice and in ideology.

This research proposes to look at the discursive elements of secular elites in the opposition through media statements from 2013-2022. This timeframe reflects the period after the Gezi Park protests, an important turning point for the opposition to unify against the government and influence political rhetoric for their interests. Despite the protests' broad appeal among different coalitions, there was no coherent political agenda, yet Turkish opposition parties, such as the Republican People's Party (CHP), “tried to instigate the political situation and put the burden of their frustrations of losing in elections and of their ideological baggage on these youngsters” (Kanat, 2013) which led to in new dynamics of Islamophobia in the opposition's rhetoric. This research will address the absence of an in-depth investigation regarding the influence of this

Islamophobic rhetoric on Muslim society in Turkey. Furthermore, this study will present the ways anti-Muslim racism participates in Turkey's media orientation and political rhetoric to shed light on the role of the opposition's influence. This proposal uses critical discourse analysis (CDA) to present potential analyses concerning the dynamics that regulate and discipline Muslim subjects and thoughts in the media. The following sections introduce the study's background, statement of the problem, research questions and objectives, the significance of the study, preliminary literature review, analytical framework, research methodology, and chapterization.

1.2 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The political function of Islamophobia typically refers to the process of antagonizing Islam and Muslims through anti-Muslim racism and sentiments to produce a Muslim "enemy" that is kept outside the social and political collective. This creation of an enemy emphasizes a difference between the inside and the outside of a nation's idea of belonging (Schmitt, 2007). It does not necessarily need to reflect an image of cultural backwardness or evil. The construction of national identities involves dialectical and often contradictory processes that account for various attachments, preferences, subjective feelings, and memberships that can feed into a sense of belonging. According to Guibernau (2004), national identity demonstrates the sentiment of belonging to the nation, and the concept of belonging "allows a theoretical foundation for the analysis of how identities can be made up of seemingly contradictory positions or memberships" (Jones & Krzyżanowski, 2008). People perceived as belonging to the nation-state are inside the political collective and those outside the nation-state's acceptable identity (Morgenthau, 2012). Thus, nation-states "are involved in a dialectic of seeking and granting belonging by determining who can belong as formal and informal members" (Knott, 2017).

In a post-colonial context, many Western nation-states' notions of belonging are related to modernity and whiteness. However, in a Muslim-majority country like Turkey, decolonization and classical racism arguments alone "lack the capacity to deal with cultural racism toward persons of the same ethnicity" (Yel, 2021). The role of discrimination, the systemization of racism, and the political production of cultural and national identities were related to the exhibition of visible signifiers of Islam, like the

headscarf or traditional attire. These signifiers were not based upon phenotypical differences but resulted in a group being “othered”.

Islamophobia policies and rhetoric that dominated from the last decades of the 19th century to the late 1990s were manufactured to serve the political ends of Kemalists during the Republic’s formation period who targeted indigenous Turks with religio-social differences compared to Atatürk’s constructed “norm” of a secular Turk. It is useful, therefore, to consider John Relethford’s definition of race and racism, which embodies “aspects of both biological and cultural variation and has been applied to everything from geography to genes and from ancestry to language” (Relethford, 2009). In the case of Turkey, cultural variations were signifiers of Islam. Thinking of Islam as a visible signifier illuminates why Atatürk and Kemalists needed to keep Islam and its signifiers out of the public sphere to replace the Ottoman Empire with a secular-nationalist Turkish republic and citizen. Visible expressions of Islam were interpreted as a threat to the secular ideology Kemalists needed to legitimate. This was done through revolutionary policies that aimed to secularize Turkish society, political structure, and culture to disinherit the Islamic political ideology of the Ottomans that was shared by most of the society. The Kemalist project was designed to create a new “Turk” and minimize the role of Islam in public life. The project strove to “produce a modern political community on the basis of a secular-nationalist identity” (Aslan, 2018) and to adopt secularist Westernist politics that conformed to the modern nation-state system. This process of secularization encompassed a long period of de-sacralizing politics and emptying the locus of power to transform into a modern political form. Modernizing and secularizing politics depends on the locus of power becoming and *remaining* an empty place that no other transcendental source of power, including religion, fills. Thus, the politics of secularism in Turkey inclined to Islamophobia since piety and outward religiosity were reminders of the Ottoman legacy and antithetical to the cultural formations needed to create a secular-modern Turk; visible Muslims were kept outside of the official image of “us.” Islam needed to be delegitimized to empty the locus of power and produce a secular-nationalist political order that was needed to create a modern nation-state and form a secular-nationalist identity. Turkish secularist elite tended to make Islam and Muslims the enemy in their struggle to form this order and the more visibly a Muslim is, the less of a Turk one is considered (Aslan, 2018).

At present, more explicit forms of Islamophobia have been dismantled by the rise of Islamic political discourse. However, the Turkish opposition continues to deploy and produce Islamophobic rhetoric vis-a-vis media statements in the name of protecting justice, democracy, and human rights. Islamophobia is directed towards other Turkish Muslims who want Islam to play a more decisive and informed role based on Quranic texts and Islamic tradition. For example, former CHP Cabinet Minister Fikri Sağlar made a television statement in December 2020 that he doubted a judge wearing a hijab would defend justice resulting from militant and ideological acts. This was after he described the hijab as a “polarizing and divisive symbol of the ideology of political Islam, which is backed by imperialism and capitalism” (Duran, 2021). When questioned on his statement, Sağlar defended discrimination and accused the Justice and Development Party (the AK Party) of exploiting religious beliefs. Many segments of the media continue to normalize, perpetuate, and legitimize Islamophobia and see it as a threat to the nation-state (Yel, 2021). The usage of Islamophobia in Turkey that is exercised by secular elites has changed from explicit to subtle expressions, but both are employed to serve the same political end that is to remove Islam from a place of power. Secularism in the context of Turkey often reflects de-Islamization projects – it is not solely a response to the democratic demands of the Turkish masses. It is also not an isolated project but rather reflects the desire to mirror the same broad patterns of secularization across Europe that replaced religion with nationalism. Since the end of the 18th century, the collapse of religion was one of the conditions for the success of nationalist ideology and what French historian Mona Ozouf refers to as the “transference of sacrality” (1976) that is from a strict religious domain to the nation, and the accrual of national state power that followed.

1.3 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

On March 3rd, 1924, under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the Caliphate was abolished. Islamophobia was central to the secular-nationalist political order, which dislocated the Ottoman model of political community and replaced it with the Westphalian nation-state model. By abolishing the Caliphate, Kemalists disrupted the relationship between Islam and state authority to create an existential modern Muslim as a political subject and relegate Islam to the private sphere. Although Islam played a generally symbolic role, it was not a determinant feature of their policies. This

dislocation was necessary for Kemalists since the abolition of the Caliphate was necessary to disarticulate Islam from the state and to replace the Muslim as a political subject with the “Turk”, paving the way for modernization in the form of European and Western institutional mimicry. Kemalists believed that Islamophobia and a secular ideology were needed to grant legitimacy to the state to replace the Islamic political ideology of the Caliphate. As a result, any Islamic political ideas are interpreted as a return to Turkey’s Ottoman legacy and a threat to secularization. Turkish secularism is particularly unique because rather than complete institutional separation, Kemalists believed secularization could only be accomplished through state policies and institutions that would control Islam. Modernization efforts conducted by state elites reflected secular identity transformations based on Western modernity as the model. For over a century, the systemization of Islamophobia was backed by the state and normalized alongside assimilation policies targeted at religious-conservative sections of society that resisted forming democratic alliances.

Kemalists believed Turkish secularization required social and cultural transformations to move away from the “Orient” of Islam towards the civilization of Europe. The Kemalist understanding of secularism was a subordination of religion that ultimately defined Islam as an affair of the state. This included a new historical narrative that reinforced the pre-Islamic history of the Turks and de-emphasized Turkey’s Islamic past. “In this sense, religion is secondary to the aims of the state that seeks to orientate social life around the rationalist principles of ‘public administration’ using science and technology as its guiding tools (Çarmikli, 2011). However, today secular policies are promoted under the guise of democracy, justice, and human rights in the name of Islam while simultaneously limiting notions of Islamic political thought and practice. Islamic political rhetoric is a powerful tool exercised by the opposition to routinely reject and ridicule Islamic reforms and ideas that do not fit the Westphalian model.

As previously discussed, secular opposition leaders have inadvertently betrayed their pseudo-Islamophobia through media statements since 2013. However, no systematic study or review has been done to trace Islamic rhetoric and the ways democracy, justice, and human rights are used in an Islamophobic manner. This thesis will provide data and insights on the ways religious-conservative Muslims in Turkey are the targets of the opposition’s Islamophobia through belittling media statements. Religious-conservative Muslims with the desire for sharia to become a political

authority are presented as anti-democratic hindrances to integration with the modern Western world and as enemies of a nationalist ‘Turkish’ identity. The secularist republican political order continues to peddle these ideals through the media under a new democratic discourse. There is an assumption that Islamophobia is absent in Turkey, but this research will uncover how far this claim is valid.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- 1) What kinds of Islamic rhetoric has the Turkish opposition utilized from 2013-2022?
- 2) How is Islamic rhetoric in the opposition normalized according to Foucault’s theory on the normalization of power?
- 3) How has Islamic discourse by the opposition affected national interests?

1.5 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- 1) To understand the evolving roles and aims of using Islamic rhetoric within the opposition.
- 2) To examine and analyze the normalization of secular power through the media.
- 3) To analyze how the opposition shapes Islamic religious discourse to serve national interests.

1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY

The main divisions between the Turkish-Islamic tradition and secularist Westernist politics that were founded in Kemalism remain constant and are now reflected through Islamic political rhetoric and the normalization of its secular power. However, the crucial difference is that with the weakening of the AK party, Islamophobia poses a real threat to the Turkish-Islamic tradition in the public sphere. This is alarming because if the opposition consolidates its powers (especially in a context where global political leaders regularly interfere with Turkey’s political autonomy) religious Turkish Muslims may suffer under another style of Atatürk’s secular-authoritarian rule. Thus, it is

important to analyze and deconstruct the Islamic rhetoric used among the opposition in Turkish media to identify forms of Islamophobia that are reproduced, reimaged, and reconstructed in the name of justice and democracy. This research will provide insights and add to the literature on Islamophobia in Turkey from a secular hegemonic perspective. Students, scholars, and policymakers may benefit from the research by identifying how Islamophobia operates within Turkey to aid their work and better inform policy decisions.

1.7 LITERATURE REVIEW

1.7.1 The Role of Modernity, Laïcité, and Islamism in the Construction of Turkish Identity

To understand the roots and transformations of Islamophobia in Turkey, it is important to understand how Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and Kemalists fashioned the secular identity of the Turk in the 1920s and what is meant by Islamophobia. This research will define Islamophobia according to Bayraklı and Hafez's (2019) definition:

Islamophobia is about a dominant group of people aspiring to seize, stabilize and widen their power by means of defining a scapegoat – real or invented – and excluding this scapegoat from the resources, rights and definition of a constructed ‘we’. Islamophobia operates by constructing a static ‘Muslim’ identity, which is attributed in negative terms and is generalized for a whole group of Muslims, often placed in opposition to ruling governments. In Muslim countries, Islamophobia can especially be understood as a way of regulating and disciplining Muslim subjects who are perceived as a threat to the dominant groups in power, thus framing Islamophobia as political. Islamophobia, as a form of racialized governmentality, aims at undermining a power-critical Muslim identity that especially questions the assumptions of a Western epistemological hegemony that is shared by Muslim elites.

The new definition of Turkishness regulated and disciplined Muslim Turks through a new secular identity where Kemalist secularism replaced the role played by Islam in the formation of the Ottoman Turkish tradition. A secular identity in the context of Turkey and the secularism this research will refer to be a “militantly secular definition of Turkishness that excluded the Ottoman Turkish tradition represented under the general signifier of Islam” (Çarmikli, 2011). Secularism was an ideology that provided Kemalists with the historical-cultural rupture from Islam they needed to present Islam as oriental and “other”. In the Turkish context, “secularism implied that Islam would not be allowed to have any significant public role in this new, modern, Western-oriented republic” (Akyol, 2019). Aslan (2018) elaborates on the Islamophobic and orientalist

measures that were established by the secular republican elite to adopt a secular-nationalist identity. The Kemalist reform agenda aimed to radically transform Turkey in a way that would make it “indistinguishable from the West, in its script, dress, music, political, organization, etc.” (Çarmikli, 2011). It was claimed that Islam was pre-modern and culturally backward and posed a hindrance to Turkish progress. Once Islam was identified as a barrier, colonial ideas were imported, and policies were soon enforced that banned anything associated with the “East.”

Additionally, Akşin (2018) observed that secular nationalists agreed that Islam and its political authority are the obstacles preventing the empire’s introduction to modern international politics and sciences. A new past absent of Islam was re-imagined and the pre-Islamic history of Turkey was emphasized to support the de-sacralization of politics. Mustafa Kemal “attempted to create an ‘imaginary’, a set of national myths, rituals, and symbols to replace those of Islam, to lessen the need for religion, to undermine its importance in public life” (Çarmikli, 2011). By creating a fictional Turk without an Islamic history, Muslim Turks became nameless and named by others, preventing a path for them to narrate themselves into the future (Sayyid, 2004). As Aytürk (2004) notes, this rejection of Islamic identity paved the way for the identity-building that culminated in the Turkish History Thesis, which glorified ancient Turks (Sumer) and highlighted their contribution to civilization. This was an attempt to “re-integrate” Turks into their true Western family and to stress Turkish contributions to their civilizational development.

Furthermore, Yel (2021) notes that orientalist ideals that associated whiteness with positive traits like being open-minded, progressive, modern, etc. were imported and shaped perceptions of race in present-day Turkey. In his book, *A Fundamental Fear: Eurocentrism and the Emergence of Islamism*, Sayyid (2015) refers to orientalism in its relation to Islamism as an exercise in power that attempts to articulate fundamentalism as abnormal and extreme, in contrast to the rationale and reason of the West. It reduces the rich diversity of Islam to an essentializing character; the same character that Yel says was used to associate religiosity in Turkey with being foreign, radical, and backward, despite Islam being an extended part of its history and culture. Orientalism played a role in developing a Turkish identity that did not target foreign or non-Turkish groups but indigenous people who “became subject to stereotypes about foreignness and otherness” (Yel, 2021). The institutional consequence of this process

of orientalizing Islam resulted in the replacement of Islamic political concepts and institutions with those of the modern West. For this reason, Turkish modernity is hard to distinguish from Westernization because Kemalism was a discourse that regarded the European civilization as universal; it was an ambitious and comprehensive social engineering project that aimed to fully convert Turkey so that it resembled a European country in all respects (Çarmikli, 2011). Both Sayyid and Yel agree that for Kemalists, becoming truly Western meant de-orientalizing which was synonymous with de-Islamization. However, there is a significant gap in the literature about the relationship between democracy as a colonial system of government and the impacts Western democracy had on the development of Islamic political thought and identity in Turkey. Colonial ideas were imported, and policies were soon enforced that banned anything associated with the “East”, however, the literature cannot account for the normalization and synthetization of democracy and Islam, despite their juxtaposing paradigms. Further works on this synthetization and juxtapositions may contribute to understanding how Islamic rhetoric has evolved in the opposition and is essentializing Islam to a democratic paradigm.

By attempting to de-center the West from their political thought and epistemology, Alam (2009) traces the ways Islamism and a Turkish-Islamic identity transformed after the founding of the secular Republic. It is useful here to refer to Sayyid’s definition of Islamism as a political discourse that attempts to center Islam’s position politically. This can range from calls for societal reform based on Islamic principles to the assertion of Muslim subjectivity; the key point is that Muslim identity is central to the political praxis. Sayyid’s work on Islamism confirms Alam’s work which stresses that Islamists’ calls for Islamic ways of life were not necessarily interested in the creation of an Islamic state but were focused on strategizing diverse ways to center Islam’s position politically. One dimension of Islamism in Turkey incorporated and domesticated Turkish nationalism to express Islamic political formations. This divide created two versions of nationalism that continue to rival each other in Turkey today: communal religious nationalism based on a Turkish-Islamic identity and secular-linguistic nationalism based on Kemalist thoughts and Eurocentric practices. However, the literature overlooks the ways centering Muslim identity rather than the authority of sharia is a byproduct of identity politics and the modern nation-state. Both forms of nationalism that were formed focused on fostering an identity

more tied to the state than Islam, and there is a gap in the literature about the role colonialism played in re-defining the sharia into a source of law rather than a paradigm for society. Most of the literature also overlooks the reality of the modern nation-state as an almost exclusively product of European experience similar to the Enlightenment. The state is an expression of a type of cultural hegemony that is at odds with Islamic ways of life. This cultural hegemony played a role in the expression of Islamic rhetoric in the public sphere until today.

Furthermore, although there is extensive research on the ways Kemalists produced a secular national identity through orientalism and policies of assimilation, there is a significant gap in the literature that process traces how human rights discourse (democracy, justice, human rights) produces and reinforces Islamophobic rhetoric through the media. Granted, the rise of the AK party and Islamism as a powerful counter-discourse may account for this lack of literature because the Kemalists were pushed out of power; however, it is worth researching how the opposition remains reliant on Western cultural practices as the template by which they define, describe, and attempt to police Islamic public thought in Turkey.

In addition, Alam (2009) examines how Islamic identity is not a fixed ideological understanding that transcends time and space. Instead, it is better understood as a terrain of contestation across different periods. Currently, the Turkish-Islamic identity formation offers many postmodern features. Many Turkish Muslim intellectuals reject apologetics, are not interested in reconciling Islam with modernity, and have become critical of the premise of modernity itself. This has affected the ways Muslims reimagine and understand their life roles privately and publicly. Alam's work also highlights the inherent inclusivity of Islam which was why Islamism was able to resonate across regional and class barriers in ways that Kemalism and secularism could not. This is because the Kemalist elite had excluded urban classes culturally and economically and inclusive calls for a conservative democracy by the AK party captured their social imagination. Alam (2009) argues that because of past injustices and political exclusions, Turkish-Islamic identity was able to challenge the modernist understanding of Islam and be nationalized. Thus, mainstream Islamism in Turkey was not a rejection of the Kemalist secular order but an alternative discourse that emerged against the crisis of Kemalism. A new Turkish-Muslim identity was formed that proved there was no inherent contradiction between pro-Western policies and a democratically

elected Islamist party. However, there is a gap in the literature about how amenable this identity was to the personality of the state and whether there is such a thing as “nationalizing” Islam. Further works need to address the contradictions between the political arrangement of the state and Islam and to what degree the Turkish state was able to destroy formations of self-understanding that were grounded in Islam as praxis rather than identity. These contradictions may account for the ways Islamic religious discourse impacts national interests in Turkey.

Furthermore, in his book “Islam in Liberalism”, Joseph A. Massad (2015) argues that the assumption of democratic identity by the West is an act not only of self-constitution but an imperial strategy that relies on cultural assimilation as a tact of political and economic domination. Massad elaborates that the West is a modern category of discourse that intentionally conjured up images and ideas of Ottoman despotism. He argues that the absence of overlap between Islam and democracy did not exist before the production of European democracy because democracy was a Christian religious discourse where democracy is portrayed as the highest stage of Christianity.

Several scholars have interrogated the impact and implications of Kemalist modernity on the formation of the Turkish state. Alam (2009) discusses the impact of Turkey’s vigorous attempts to internalize the paradigm of European modernity through a Kemalist construction of Islam that had a monopoly over the appointments of religious leaders. Rather than disestablishing Islam, the state controlled its religious affairs and attempted to impose a modernist understanding of religion as a private matter. However, the Kemalist articulation of religion was defined according to a post-Reformation Europe that was inspired by the staunch secularism in France (*laïcité*). This articulation failed to understand the ways the historical materialist development of Christianity during Europe’s reformation bore minimal resemblance to the history and role of Islam during the Ottoman Empire.

Similarly, Yel (2021) also discusses how, under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, secular elites forged an image of the Turkish national identity based exclusively on European understandings of secularism and modernity. *Laïcité* was understood as the total expulsion of religion from the public space, and this understanding was problematic in Turkey because it could not accommodate the historical context of a six-century-old Ottoman dynasty. Religion was, and remains, an

inalienable aspect of Turkey's traditional past and the implementation of a Westernist modernist model was the beginning of staunch secularists' denial. This relocated all "Islamist" issues within a Western discourse and identity that were out of context.

Alam (2009) further elaborates on how Kemalists depended on Western cultural practices to define, police, and master their vision of the Turkish Republic. However, Sayyid (2015) contrasts these ideas by noting that rather than thinking of secularism as the exclusion of Islam and religion from public space, it is more accurate to observe how Islam was redefined as a religion according to a Christian and orientalist understanding. Sayyid notes that this understanding is more useful to understand why the AK party challenged this perception within a century; a liberal secularism based on an Anglo-American model was stressed instead. This line of thinking is further elaborated by Yavuz (2009) who states that the conditions of each society ultimately determine its practice of secularism. Therefore, he claims that the Turkish understanding and implementation of secularism is neither Anglo-American nor of the French Republic, but rather a third mode where the state develops institutions to control religious networks and symbols. One form of control was clearly seen through abolishing the Caliphate and replacing the Sultan with the National Grand Assembly. Islamic affairs were submitted to the Directorate of Religious Affairs (*Diyanet*), a newly formed institution that made it possible to regulate and control Turkey's religious affairs. Islamic law was replaced by secular legislation, Islamic educational institutions were shut down, and Turkey's pre-Islamic history was emphasized (Çarmikli, 2011). This was done with three goals in mind: to create a state version of an enlightened Islam that would promote the Turkish modernization project, to employ Islam to provide legitimacy for its government and quash opposition to using religion against the state, and to use Islam to build national identities and to define and set the political community boundaries. However, there is a gap in the literature about whether this claim is due to the Turkish understanding of secularism or secularism in and of itself. More research is needed regarding secularism as an ideology that determines what religion is and is not and how secular power has been normalized to determine the quality and quantity of religious spheres in modern nation-states and the political discourse of the media.

1.7.2 Islamophobia, Secular Nationalism, and the Media

Aslan (2018) discusses how Islamophobia was deployed to produce a secular-nationalist reality in Turkey that would produce a modern political community absent of the concept of the ummah. This secular nationalism was primarily founded through the CHP's six arrows, which focused on republicanism, populism, nationalism, laïcism, statism, and revolutionism. It could be argued that the emergence of modern Turkey was a transition from the multinational Ottoman Empire to the monocultural Kemalist Republic model (Çarmikli, 2011). This type of secular nationalism sought to “set materialism, science, and nationalism as the new bases for the legitimacy of the political order” (Aslan, 2018), rather than Islam or an Islamic caliphate system. “God was to be replaced by the ‘Nation’ (Çarmikli, 2011) and political parties were closed based on promoting anti-secularist activities, although they had no ties to terrorist activities or violence. This ties into Sayyid’s understanding of Islamophobia as a “form of governmentality” intended to protect national identities and systematically regulate and discipline Muslimness (Sayyid 2014, p. 423). This form of governmentality also complements Saba Mahmood’s (2006) writings in “Secularism, Hermeneutics, and Empire” where she suggests that the secular state’s political solutions are not about tolerating difference and diversity but “in remaking certain kinds of religious subjectivities (even if this requires the use of violence) to render them compliant with the liberal political rule” (Mahmood 2006, p. 328). In the case of Islam, this multilayered project was intended to foster a ‘moderate Islam’, an ideological project and antidote to fundamentalist interpretations of Islam. This is further emphasized by Yavuz (2009) who argues that the Kemalist modernization project in Turkey was directed at religious institutions and practices which contrasts with the aims of the American Revolution which was directed at the state and carried out *with* religious institutions. American revolutionaries allied with religious institutions to prevent state interference with religious affairs. Michael Meeker (2002) referred to this peculiar marriage between Kemalism and Islam as Kemalo-Islamism. On the one hand, Kemalist secularism tried to limit or eliminate Islamic influence in society while on the other, it created an official state version of Islam and “sponsored it to the detriment of other interpretations” (Çarmikli, 2011).

It is also interesting to note that almost all Kemalist reforms were related directly or indirectly to religion (Kara, 2019). These reforms were enacted not to protect

secularism but rather to establish secularism in Turkey and the “Kemalist discourse of secularism mostly ‘solved’ this problem by denying religion any existence in the public sphere and limiting or simply denying the basic democratic rights” (Çarmikli, 2011). Furthermore, Islamic visibility threatened the laïcism of the state because of its religio-political underpinnings (Yel, 2021). The Republican project perceived symbols, signs, or performances (including both the call to prayer and prayer) of Islam in public as a threat to the progress of its militant secularism. This was also evidenced through the 1926 publication of “There is No Religion, Just Nationality: My Turkishness is My Religion”, a book by an MP in the CHP that was well received by Mustafa Kemal (Çarmikli, 2011). Islamophobia became a form of racism experienced emotionally by visible Muslims in their day-to-day lives and doubled as a patriarchal discourse that targeted women who wore the hijab. Signifiers of Islam became loaded within racialized contexts and secular-nationalists maintained a dominant discourse on who belonged to the secular-nationalist image of Turkey. This discourse was formed during the Republic’s formation period to create a new identity for Turkey independent of the Ottoman empire and based on the nation-state.

In contrast, Walker (1993) noted that he believes the formation of the nation-state and secular nationalism helped combat Islamophobia. The creation of Turkey as a nation-state played a dual role when replacing empires; it facilitated the integration of Muslims into the global modern world and ensured that national Muslim sovereign polities were able to produce a political difference with the outside. Although this is a valid observation, this methodology and understanding are dependent on international relations theories which can only account for relations between nations and could not account for the Islamophobia conservative-religious Turks were facing within the national boundaries of Turkey.

Yel (2021) discusses the significance of the Turkish media’s role in shaping public discourse to form a perception of Islam. The media acts as a kind of battleground where the image of Islam is reshaped and reconstructed according to the state of contemporary politics. He emphasizes how Islamophobic images and texts produced by the media in a Muslim-majority country are implicit and more subtle compared to the blatantly derogatory and Islamophobic media found in non-Muslim majority societies. He stressed how the media in Turkey distanced the public from its Islamic traditions

and roots because its link to traditionalism was perceived as an uncultured past that needed to be hidden from the public eye.

Contrastingly, Nurdan Akiner and Mustafa Sami Mencet (2016) argue that representations of Islam in Turkish media, specifically in satirical magazines, predominantly portray Muslims with the same Islamophobic and stereotypical representations as seen in the West. Although they agree that Islamophobia in the Turkish media is understudied and has contributed to the worsening of Islamophobic sentiments across the country, they do not believe that Turkish media is any more subtle or implicit than in non-Muslim majority countries. Rather, the same themes and modes of media that produce images of terrorism, perversion, and dishonesty among Muslims are found in both Turkey and the West.

Yardımcı and Easat-Daas (2018) came to similar conclusions regarding Turkish satire. Publications of Islamophobic cartoons in magazines like the Turkish magazine *Penguen* reproduce the same types of Islamophobic tropes as the infamous French magazine *Charlie Hebdo*. Their analysis of Islamophobia is situated between the conclusions of Yel's work and Akiner and Mencet's findings and addresses both commonalities and differences between the West and Muslim societies. Additionally, Yel (2021) highlights the way the media played a pivotal role in denying Islam's existence in Turkey before the 1990s. This was accomplished by portraying the Turkish people as a people with no religion through various materialist and secular publications to maintain.

After the rise of the AK party, Islam's role was acknowledged in the media, but its representations remained Islamophobic and presented Islam as a hindrance to modernization because a secular hegemony still owned the media. This majority ownership can be largely attributed to the establishment of Kemalism during the preliminary stages of the Republican era because Islamic segments of society were intentionally excluded from various industries, especially the media. Bayraklı and Hafez (2016) argue that this exclusion from access to privileged resources like the media denies Muslims the rights that the dominating group both benefits and is defined by. Although the advances in the political representation of Muslims and the rise of the AK party were accompanied by Islamic cultural transformations, presently, secular media continue to humiliate Islam. There is a gap in the literature and a lack of media

analysis scrutinizing how secular media in Turkey have changed the way they target Islam. Islamophobia remains a valuable tool for the Turkish state's cultural secular hegemony to ensure that the dichotomy between Islam and modernity is not deconstructed and needs further study.

Aslan (2018) elaborates on how the secular republican elite used Islamophobia to establish and maintain their power until the late 1990s. This was through anti-Islamic and anti-Muslim sentiments, which contributed to the process of antagonizing Muslims in Turkey. Aslan (2018) also looks at how radical secular policies have contributed to the growth of Islamophobia in Muslim countries. There is a significant gap in the literature when dealing with Muslim-majority countries or societies. He also stresses how Islamophobia is systematic and institutionalized, and how viewing these sentiments as mere prejudice discounts the ways Islamophobia is normalized as an ideology that was backed by the state then and is backed by secular media outlets today. He contrasts the political function of Islamophobia in Muslim minority countries, particularly with a focus on the West, to its function in Muslim majority countries. Aslan (2018) argues that in the West, Islamophobia's function is to rid the political body of Islam and Muslims to ensure that Muslims are kept outside of the political community. Usually, this is done through the creation of a "Muslim enemy." This creation is also supported by the media's overall silence regarding Muslims unless they are a threat, meaning that "Muslims become visible as people only when they represent threats *as Muslims*, and thus, they exist only as Muslims" (Gottschalk & Greenberg, 2008, p. 143).

However, there is a significant gap in how the representation of Muslims and Islam in the media is about the creation of a progressive Muslim character whose connection and allegiance to nationalism ultimately trumps the commitment to faith. This is visible with the rise of hit TV shows like "Ramy" which are positioned within the Western media's overall movement of neoliberalizing Muslim identities. Talal Asad (2003) touches on this point by highlighting how the public space, including the media, only invites public expressions of religion so long as they align with liberal thought.

This expression is also more predominantly found in Muslim-majority countries and needs further study. The function of Islamophobia operates very differently; it is not to rid the political body of visible representations of Islam and Muslims but to eliminate any consolidation of Islamic powers that contradict the ideas

of Western modernity and pose obstacles to integration with the Western world. There needs to be a more literary focus on how the visibility of Islam necessitates the liberalization of Islamic practices. In other words, opposition parties may introduce bills to protect hijab and speak on behalf of a Turkish-Islamic identity. However, this identity is predicated upon the absence of *sharia* as a legitimate authority. This research will explore and trace the evolution of Islamophobia in Turkey from its Kemalist foundations in comparison to how Islamophobia has transformed today and analyze how Kemalist goals remain linked despite rhetorical changes.

1.8 ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

This dissertation is based on the idea found in Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) that social realities are socially constructed, and our experiences are best understood from a subjective standpoint. This includes the construction of Turkish identities as they are formed and reformed with the interests and ideologies of political parties and the media. Since these ideologies, such as Islamism, Kemalism, and secularism, do not exist in a non-discursive place, it is through discourse that secular media and politicians articulate their Islamophobia. This methodology will allow for the examination of normalized power, born out of the thinking of Michel Foucault, which focuses on allusive power structures and how these mechanisms of power produce and maintain distinct types of knowledge.

Foucault (1980) states that an individual is carefully fabricated into a social order according to “a whole technique of forces and bodies” (p. 217) and his thoughts offer many insights about the effects of political rhetoric on power, knowledge, and normalization concerning Islamophobia in Turkey. CDA will allow for an in-depth understanding of how Islamic rhetoric in the Turkish context is used to normalize Islamophobia and inform a normative discourse that limits Islam’s role in politics. According to Bayram (2010), politicians use language and rhetorical skills to exercise, gain, and sustain political power, a struggle whose success depends on the rhetoric’s usage. Political rhetoric is a strategy used to construct persuasive arguments to persuade people to accept a given ideology (Condor, Tileaga, and Billig, 2013), which can be traced by examining the language used by the opposition to form political discourse that contains Islamophobic elements that are justified through a secularist framework.

Secularism in the Turkish context meant to take Islam out of politics while maintaining the state's involvement in religious affairs (Feyzioğlu, 1992). Mustafa Kemal's main goal was to reinvent Islam in the name of national and state interests and CDA will allow us to examine how those interests are translated and expressed in the media.

Turkish secular nationalism continues to play an assertive and moderating role in Islamic activism so that Islam's political influence is continuously reshaped and contained within a nationalist framework. Nationalism remains the framework for imagining an acceptable form of Islamism in Turkey (Yavuz, 2009). For example, Akşener mocked Erdoğan for slashing interest rates stating that "no one takes Erdoğan's flat economy thesis seriously" (Farooq, 2021). Although not explicitly stated, this "flat economy thesis" refers to the Islamic prohibition of interest. Reverence for Allah (swt) and Islamism that takes Quranic guidance seriously is absent from the opposition, but through persuasive political rhetoric, party leaders in the opposition can redress their Islamophobia in the name of democracy and appeal to the practicing citizen. "The opposition, sincerely or not, seems to have finally understood that every election campaign needs to take the religious majority in Turkey into account" (Atlas, 2018). In the Turkish context, politicians no longer explicitly define Islam as a problem or threat to national identity. This framework will examine how, although this majority is considered, it is based upon secular-nationalist rhetoric and not Islamic ideals.

The secularism expressed by the opposition in Turkey remains a European importation united along secular-nationalist and ideological pursuits that juxtapose Islamic concepts and reflect Atatürk's ideals (Saikal, 2003). This contributes to molding the models of secular thought and normalizing Islamophobia. CDA can help analyze how Islam is indirectly and subtly defined as a problem or a threat by the opposition instead of a cultural and economic contributor to Turkish society. Similarly, CDA can also examine how practicing Muslims and the policies or actions they support "may be described by negative lexical terms or rhetorical gestures" (van Dijk, 1995) while the negative actions of secular elites in the opposition are routinely deemphasized.

1.9 METHODS AND PROCEDURES

A qualitative design was chosen because this study is concerned with language and experiences. The research design of this study will be primarily based on a literature review and analysis of media statements from the opposition bloc to demonstrate the

development of Kemalism and Islamophobia in Turkey. The media statements will primarily focus on statements and speeches from the party leaders of the “Table of Six”, an opposition alliance consisting of the Republican People’s Party (CHP), the Good Party (İyi), the Democratic Party (DP), the Felicity Party (SP), the Future Party (GP), and the Democracy and Progress Party (DEVA). The “Table of Six”, also known as the National Alliance, was selected because it represents a wide array of political philosophies in the opposition ranging from two post-Kemalist groups (CHP and İyi) and four fringe parties. The opposition coalition had the common goal of unseating the President and providing a political alternative to the ruling bloc. The sample selection will include 10-15 media statements from each respective party leader from Turkish and international media outlets and social media to examine how Islam and religiosity are portrayed as antithetical to justice and the state's progress. There will be a particular focus on media statements made in the Turkish language that will be translated into English for this analysis with a focus on newspapers such as *Sözcü-Cumhuriyet* as these are known as liberal-Kemalist networks. However, publications in English mediums will also be included.

The data will be analyzed according to critical discourse analysis (CDA) to shed light on the similarities in strategies in media discourse to “other” Islam to the ideologies that founded Kemalism and Turkey and to identify how challenging the “norm” of secularism and the glorification of Atatürk is seen as a result to the loss of power. CDA is concerned with analyzing written and spoken texts, such as the political statements of the opposition, to uncover the interrelated sources of power and inequality (van Dijk, 2015). According to van Dijk, CDA is a powerful tool that “unmasks the ideology and power embedded in the rhetoric of political leaders” (Barkessa, 2019). CDA will allow this research to go beyond the literal meaning of words and languages and investigate the functions of political rhetoric, particularly in the name of justice and democracy, to uncover how meanings are constructed, given the historical background of Turkey.

This methodology is best suited to examine how these sources of power maintain and reproduce Islamophobia within the specific social, political, and historical context of Turkey. Since critical discourse analysis is problem-oriented and multidisciplinary, it is an appropriate approach to effectively study the social problem of Islamophobia in Turkey, especially by focusing on the relations between discourse and Turkish society and how political elites influence the beliefs of large segments of

the majority to legitimize political decisions (van Dijk, 1995). CDA also studies how narrative structures are constructed through rhetoric (i.e., hyperbole, metaphor) to emphasize how the exercise of power can create different types of Islamophobic knowledge that are embedded into secular media institutions. This research uses CDA to explain the discursive Islamic rhetoric used by the Turkish opposition to other conservative Muslims, normative ideas of Islam, and the AKP. The statements will be analyzed by applying a protocol to determine which media statements are relevant to investigating the construction and normalization of Islamophobic discourse. For a media statement to be considered it must be:

- A) Published between the years 2013-2022
- B) Contains quotes from opposition party leaders.
- C) Published in the Turkish or English language.
- D) Mentions Islam and human rights, democracy, or justice.
- E) Misappropriate Islamic concepts or other conservative Turkish Muslims

1.10 CHAPTERIZATION

Chapter One includes a basic introduction to Turkey and the evolution of secularism and Islamophobia in the nation. It provides a brief overview of the problem; a comprehensive review of existing literature related to the study and provides the research methodology and analytical framework used throughout this paper.

Chapter Two is about what kinds of Islamic rhetoric the opposition utilized from 2013-2022.

Chapter Three looks at how Islamic rhetoric is normalized according to Foucault's theory on the normalization of power.

Chapter Four discusses how the Islamic discourses are produced, expressed, and legitimated through the political rhetoric of the opposition affecting national interests.

Chapter Five provides a conclusion, an overarching summary, and the limitations of this study, including recommendations for future endeavors.

CHAPTER TWO

THE UTILIZATION OF ISLAMIC RHETORIC BY THE OPPOSITION IN THE MEDIA

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The following chapter analyzes the media statements made by political leaders from the opposition alliance known as the "Table of Six" in Turkey between 2013 and 2022. Six opposition parties formed this alliance: the Republican People's Party (CHP), the Good Party (İyi), the Democratic Party (DP), the Felicity Party (SP), and the two splinter parties from the AKP, the Future Party (GP), and the Democracy and Progress Party (DEVA). Parts of this alliance met from 2019 to 2023 with the common goal of overhauling the existing executive presidential system and restoring the parliamentary system which culminated on February 28th, 2022, when all six political leaders of these parties formally signed a joint manifesto to initiate a transition to a parliamentary system after the June 2023 elections. Despite their ideological differences, the leaders of these parties employed Islamic rhetoric to appeal to conservative voters and criticize the ruling AKP. This chapter will introduce who the leaders of the "Table of Six" are and examine how they utilized rhetorical devices such as irony, metaphor, analogy, hyperbole, and more to shape public beliefs and opinions through the media in the Turkish political context. The analysis reveals five recurrent themes in the Islamic rhetoric used by the opposition: distorting Islamic concepts for political gain, manipulating rhetoric through various devices, reconstructing historical narratives through Islamic rhetoric, misappropriating Islamic concepts to legitimize opposition, and employing orientalist tropes.

Additionally, this chapter delves into the significance of rhetoric in the political arena and how it influences public discourse, decision-making, and agenda-setting. The chapter emphasizes that rhetoric is central to political discussions and is vital in shaping relationships between political elites, the media, the population, and the socio-political context. In the context of the Turkish opposition's use of Islamic rhetoric, the chapter discusses how language can be used to persuade citizens to adopt specific political positions on Islam and other issues. The chapter also addresses the symbiotic relationship between media and rhetoric, highlighting how the media's role in

disseminating political messages can impact the perception of Islam's role in Turkish politics, and argues that the opposition's use of Islamic rhetoric can be seen as a strategic tool to attract support and present their parties as more aligned with authentic Islamic values, despite their diverse ideological positions. Furthermore, the chapter explores the role of media in amplifying and filtering this rhetoric, potentially leading to Islamophobia, misappropriation, and sensationalism in public discourse. This chapter further discusses the limitations of using the concept of Islamophobia as a framework for understanding these dynamics and how the opposition's use of Islamic rhetoric intersects with the development of an Islamic political consciousness within Turkey. It concludes by acknowledging the potential for bias, manipulation, and Islamophobia in the presentation of Islamic rhetoric by the "Table of Six" and the media, and emphasizes the complex relationship between Islam, politics, and rhetoric in Turkish society, highlighting both the benefits and potential drawbacks of employing Islamic rhetoric within a political context.

2.2 BACKGROUND OF THE TABLE OF SIX

This analysis traces media statements between 2013-2022 made by political leaders from the opposition alliance, the "Table of Six". This specific constellation of actors includes the political leaders from the "Table of Six", an alliance that was formally declared on February 28th, 2022, when leaders of six opposition parties in Turkey signed a joint declaration aimed entirely at overhauling the existing executive presidential system to restore the parliamentary system and strip powers of the president given a 2023 election win. These leaders and their respective parties included Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu (CHP), Meral Akşener (İyi), Temel Karamollaoğlu (SP), Gültekin Uysal (DP) and the two AKP splinter party leaders, Ali Babacan (DEVA) and Ahmet Davutoğlu (GP). Although many of the parties have very little in common in terms of their ideology or political views besides the common goal of the declaration, their usage of Islamic rhetoric is comparable, apart from Temel Karamollaoğlu (SP) which will be discussed later.

The chief architect of this opposition alliance was the leader of the CHP, Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu. After becoming the CHP leader in 2010, Kılıçdaroğlu changed the party's strategy and began to seek closer cooperation with other political parties while

simultaneously toning down the CHP's intolerant positions, particularly regarding the headscarf ban and the Kurdish question. In 2018, the CHP assisted the İyi party in meeting the requirements to form a parliamentary group and İyi subsequently joined the National Alliance along with SP and DP (Uras, 2018). These four parties would later be joined by the leaders of the AKP splinter parties, DEVA and GP which formed the complete "Table of Six". The inclusion of the AKP splinter parties into the opposition bloc was significant because it signaled the possibility of appealing to dissatisfied AKP supporters and winning their votes. Representatives from all six opposition parties began to meet regularly in 2021 across several months to agree upon a common political platform and signed a joint manifesto in February 2022 known as the "Strengthened Parliamentary System" (Şar, 2023). These parties were specifically selected from the "Table of Six" represented "the most comprehensive opposition platform since Turkey's transition to multi-party democracy in 1950" (Esen, 2022). The monthly meetings and joint policy vision from starkly ideologically diverse opposition parties was unprecedented in republican history. The opposition bloc universally focused on preventing a split in their votes in a coordinated effort to unseat President Erdoğan and their usage of Islamic rhetoric was comparable.

Political elites in Turkey influence the beliefs of large segments of the majority to legitimize political decisions, often vis-à-vis the convolution of Islam and democracy and the misappropriation of Islamic concepts, despite their actual policy platforms and positions being antithetical to Islamic practice and sharia. The language the "Table of Six" uses includes irony/paradox, metaphor, analogy, hyperbole, etc. to control and steer people's beliefs in a given political context (Gee, 2007). These rhetorical devices realize the discourse strategies employed in the media and in political statements to construct, perpetuate, and mitigate the national and domestic interests and beliefs of various populations (Van Leeuwen, 2008). This chapter shows the way Islamic rhetoric is employed to devalue conservative Islamic belief systems and the AKP's sets of ideas. The media analysis revealed five broad patterns and kinds of Islamic rhetoric that recurred across statements made by each party member in the opposition, except for the leader of the Felicity Party, Temel Karamollaoğlu. The themes are as follows:

1. Distorting Islamic concepts to appeal to a conservative voter base and condemn the AKP in the name of Islam.

2. The manipulation of Islamic rhetoric through hyperbole, paradox, metaphor, analogy, and parallelism.
3. Reconstructing historical narratives through Islamic rhetoric to promote a secular Turkish-Islamic nationalism.
4. Misappropriating Islamic concepts and combining them with Turkish history to legitimize opposition to the AKP.
5. Orientalist tropes

2.3 POLITICAL RHETORIC

In the political arena, rhetoric is the playground where public attention is won, and certain goals are achieved. Rhetoric is the center of public discussion, debate, and deals with the ever-changing and dynamic relations among speakers, audiences, and situations (Kane and Papatan, 2010 & Williams et al. 2012). In this case, these dynamic relations are occurring among political elites, media, the Turkish population, and the socio-political context of Turkey. Rhetorical skills also allow politicians to apply political, social, and economic ideas through agenda-setting, decision-making, and resource controlling (Bayram, 2010). These skills and devices are linguistic means of persuading Turkish citizens to take specified political positions regarding Islam through discursive practices and strategies used by the opposition through different types of Islamic rhetoric.

Rhetorical devices, therefore, are productive ways of using language to maintain, construct, describe, or change political circumstances or lived experiences. In the Turkish context, these devices often reinforce Islamophobic ideologies and secular rationality as progress. Since every discourse community “shares a number of *topoi*, or rhetorical commonplaces, that both enable and constrain speakers’ rhetorical possibilities” (Krebs and Jackson, 2007), it is especially important to understand how Turkish politicians configure their appeals utilizing Islamic rhetoric. Furthermore, rhetoric becomes even more significant in today's media-dominated landscape as political messages are disseminated rapidly and widely across various channels. Turkish secular media acts as both a conduit and filter for Islamic rhetoric, amplifying certain types of Islamic messaging while silencing or ridiculing others. This symbiotic

relationship between media and rhetoric can lead to the perpetuation of Islamophobia, misappropriation, and sensationalism, rather than fostering informed public engagement about Islam's role in Turkish politics. As a result, it is essential to crucially analyze the Islamic rhetoric presented by the "Table of Six" and the media to recognize bias, manipulation, and Islamophobia.

Before illustrating the themes and kinds of Islamic rhetoric the opposition utilized from 2013-2022, it is important to briefly illustrate the limitations of Islamophobia as a conceptual framework, and how its usage poses issues for the development of an Islamic political consciousness, both generally and in Turkey, due to its secular logic. These issues play a contributing role in why the Turkish opposition can use Islamic rhetoric when propagating their respective agendas despite advocating for secular or anti-Islamic solutions. Words are crucial in the understanding and obscuring ideas. Failing to use Arabic words and their respective translations from the Quran to convey correct political meanings and realities implies an unawareness of the Islamic worldview or the moral vision of a Muslim. By naming and explaining anti-Islamic activities of Muslim-majority countries as Islamophobic, the meanings become attributed to a politically racialized and secularized paradigm rather than within the Quran. Muslims become a people without the Quranic stories as a true historical account, and their futures are narrated and named by others, limiting the potential of ummatic praxis. This narration is especially problematic when it comes to identifying differences between varying sources of power that maintain and reproduce Islamophobic rhetoric in the Turkish opposition. The framework of Islamophobia cannot always adequately account for how different types of Islamophobic knowledge are being normalized *through* Islamic rhetoric, according to each party's respective agenda agendas, while simultaneously influencing the construction of Turkish national identity.

2.4 ISLAMOPHOBIC HYPERBOLE

The distortion of Islamic concepts and rhetorical devices often occurred in conjunction across statements. In the case of hyperbole, for example, in 2018, the Turkish army launched "Operation Olive Branch", a ground incursion into Afrin, a Kurdish-populated area in Syria, to remove the People's Protection Units (YPG) from the area. The

offensive, which Good Party (İyi) leader Meral Akşener approved, came following a US announcement that it would train an army that would include the YPG to patrol Syria's borders. Despite supporting the offensive, Akşener took issue with Turkish President, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's inflammatory rhetoric when he stated, "We will crush anyone who opposes our national struggle" (Shaheen, 2018) and threatened to "destroy all terror nests" (Chuov & Shaheen, 2018) about Kurdish forces. In response, Akşener stated:

We are currently living in a period in Turkey where all national, spiritual, and religious values have been emptied. Those who do not abandon Islam on their tongues, do not see any harm in [committing] the worst sin of "human rights", which Allah Almighty says He will not forgive. I ask you: "Is there any such thing as justice left in this country? I promise you justice. I promise a judgment that will take the rights of the weak from the strong (Sözcü-Cumhuriyet, 2018).

Before mentioning Islam, Akşener referred to the İyi Party as a brave movement, a women's movement, and a movement of values. Akşener seems to suggest that the İyi party, under her leadership, would fill the supposed Islamic and spiritual failures of Erdoğan and the AKP. It is a particularly powerful statement given that she invoked Allah and claimed He will not forgive their mistakes. This usage of Islamic rhetoric targets conservative constituents and creates a false narrative regarding Allah's forgiveness. Akşener utilizes the concept of sin to condemn Erdoğan and promises to deliver justice, which she suggested cannot be delivered by Erdoğan because of his empty national, spiritual, and religious values. Erdoğan's Islam is framed not only as hollow but as antithetical to creating a just Turkish state. This is also in line with her 2022 statements claiming that the government cannot adequately bestow freedom and democracy, the most precious rights of the Turkish people, to the country (Hürriyet, 2022). Rather, Akşener's narrative of Allah's justice and forgiveness reproduces a type of Islamophobic knowledge that intentionally misappropriates Islamic concepts in the name of the party's political agenda. The Chairwoman positioned herself as the just underdog who will deliver justice and protect the weak from the strong, a narrative that has a generally strong appeal to audiences because of its universal resonance with the human desire for justice, triumph over adversity, and the perception of reclaiming their rights from the strong.

The hyperbolic practice of distorting rhetoric by appealing to conservative voters is not limited to the İyi Party. On October 4th, 2022, the CHP submitted a bill

titled “Not Subjecting Women to Any Coercion Except for Dressing within the Scope of the Execution of Their Profession” to protect women’s freedom to wear the headscarf in the public sphere. Chairperson Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu stated the law was a bid to end politicians’ ability to exploit protecting hijab in the name of protecting their political positions. Regarding the proposal, he stated:

The Turkish people suffered the most from polarization and discrimination. For the first time in our Republican history, we are experiencing such a deep polarization [...] we have so many open wounds. Those who want to bleed these wounds are politicians who want to keep their seats. We are coming to power to heal all these open wounds. (Hürriyet, 2022)

Contrary to Kılıçdaroğlu’s hyperbolic statement, it is not the first time in the Republic’s history that the divide between secular and conservative groups occurred. Kılıçdaroğlu presents his party as capable of healing metaphorical wounds that the CHP’s ideology imposed upon conservative Turkish groups in the past. In 2008, when the same AK Party politicians that Kılıçdaroğlu alluded to sought to amend the republic’s constitution on headscarves, the Chairman stated that hijab was a threat to modern democracy and “would harm public order, social peace, and unity” (Daily Sabah, 2022). The usage of Islamic rhetoric and hyperbole by Kılıçdaroğlu is a useful political tool that can be leveraged to gain voter support while rewriting both the party’s and the nation’s history. The CHP is aware that its previous positionality regarding hijab as a threat to democracy and explicitly portraying Islam and religiosity as antithetical to the state’s progress is no longer possible in the current political climate, considering the conservative voter base.

In addition to rewriting historical narratives, the Islamic rhetoric constructed by the opposition also promotes a secular Turkish-Islamic nationalism that combines Islamic and Turkish history to legitimize opposition to the AKP. For example, at the 14th Grand Congress of the Democratic Party in 2022, Chairman Gültekin Uysal criticized the government through reference to the Prophet Muhammad (s) and Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. Uysal stated,

They say, ‘If we [AKP] go, the state will collapse’. Has the truth come to the prophet of Islam, but has the religion of Islam collapsed [after his death]? Did the great leader Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, who brought the Turkish nation out of a line leading to annihilation, pass away and the Republic collapse? Will it be destroyed when those who are now trying

to overthrow the Republic, looting public resources with tie-in robbery are gone? (Firat, 2022)

Combining Islamic and national rhetoric, especially regarding revering Atatürk in Turkey, is common practice. In this statement, an association and a positive relation are being made between Islam and the Prophet (s), and the national beginnings of Turkey and Atatürk in juxtaposition to the AKP. Uysal also misappropriates the concept of preservation in Islam by drawing a comparison to the preservation of the Republic of Turkey which suggests an almost divine national invincibility and furthers a Turkish-Islamic nationalism. The purpose of such framing and rhetorical parallelism maintains Islam as a point of reference inextricably linked to Turkish nationalism, and Islamic terminology is instrumentalized to re-narrate and imagine compatibilities between the divine leadership of the Prophet (s), and the nationally motivated leadership of Atatürk.

Islamic rhetoric is also used to criticize the seemingly un-Islamic decisions of the AKP by other parts of the opposition, like Ahmet Davutoğlu, the leader of the Future Party. Davutoğlu, a former AKP member, served as foreign minister from 2009 to 2014 and prime minister from 2014 to 2016. Following a dispute with Erdoğan in 2019, Davutoğlu founded an independent party that became a part of the opposition alliance known as the “Table of Six”. In a 2021 statement, Davutoğlu accused the AKP of promoting the views of the heretical Jabriyya school which he said, “emerged in history to legitimize the oppression of the rulers”. This statement was made on Davutoğlu’s social media accounts in response to Erdoğan’s statement “If they have dollars, we also have Allah. Our weapon against interest is divine text [the Quran].” Deputy Chairman Süleyman Soylu of the AKP followed the remark with “Allah makes us do these [fight interest] things” Davutoğlu claimed that Erdoğan’s statement was a fallacy and that “Allah is free from all opposition. Divine text is not an instrument of war, but a principle of universal justice and peace.” (Sözcü-Cumhuriyet, 2021) He went on to criticize Soylu for being heretical by claiming that Allah compels people to act, a mentality which he said, “is contrary to the Islamic belief, and is at the root of the problems” and chided opinion leaders for “staying silent in the face of these words that are clearly contrary to the Islamic belief” and in the face of the “multiple interest” model of the government. He continued saying,

We, on the other hand, first do what our minds and knowledge require, and then we trust! [...] We will eliminate the damage this government

has done to our religion and economy; We will give respect to our moral values and gain prestige in our economy. (Davutoğlu, 2021)

What is interesting to note is that Davutoğlu's response relies both upon orientalist thinking that has constructed a dual framework where Islam is synonymous with war and violence. The construction of "them" refers to the AKP and those who share their Islamic understandings of the Quran while "us" refers to Davutoğlu and those who understand the correct Islamic belief as everything a Turkish Muslim with non-heretical and rational thinking, is not. In this dichotomy, the AKP is affiliated with backwardness, violence, and has a barbaric understanding of the role of the Quran, which plays upon the historical legacy and use of a negative lexicon that normalized the idea that Islam is tied to violence and that Muslims, in this case, the AKP, are uncivilized.

Davutoğlu's rhetoric also reinforces the good Muslim versus bad Muslim dichotomy where his understanding is portrayed as moderate and "genuine" Islam, while those of the AKP are bad, extreme, and incorrect. The dynamics of the development of religious identity into a political category, or what Mahmood Mamdani (2002) refers to as "good Muslim, bad Muslim", is not exclusive to the West and its treatment of Muslims but also how Muslims themselves can benefit from this categorization through media rhetoric. Although the opposition may not have explicitly uttered phrases such as 'good Muslim' and 'bad Muslim', they regularly draw contrasts between 'good' and 'bad' or sinful Islamic behavior, with the AKP occupying the latter.

It is important to note however that although the AKP initially positioned itself as a populist party that voiced the grievances of conservative groups who felt rejected by Kemalist principles, they have increasingly been accused of using the same tactics to position Sunni-Turks as "religiously "pure" (Yilmaz, 2021) and the true pious people of Turkey, in contrast to Turks deemed as secular, pro-Western, and foreign-sponsored (Yilmaz, Barton & Barry, 2017). It is more useful, however, to understand the historic role of Islam as a source of national identity in Turkey concerning its long-lasting consequences. In the formative years of the AKP, politics of co-optation were indeed utilized to reconcile minorities, such as Alevis and Kurds, within the Muslim-Turkish nation (Yabancı, 2022). One such example was the "Alevi Directorate" which provided state funds for *cemevis*, Alevi sites for religious practice.

The message of religious identity as a political category from the AKP was not about “good Muslim” and “bad Muslim” but rather about “Turkish-Muslim” and “non-Turkish, non-Muslim” to create an inclusive and ideal Turkish-Muslim citizenry that was loyal to both the nation and faith. The AKP’s attempts to manufacture an ideal citizen were more aligned with the mainstream statist tradition that defines Islam in cultural terms as a part of national identity. This was also evidenced in the 2023 elections after opposition leader Kilicdaroglu publicly announced that he was an Alevi. In response, Erdoğan stated, “We do not have a Sunni, Alevi, or Shia religion; our religion has only one name, and that is Islam. Our religious identity has only one name, and that is being a Muslim” (Anadolu Agency, 2023). This emphasizes the point that it is not in the AKP’s political interest to define what is and is not Islamic behavior or privilege Sunni practices, but rather to reinforce nationalized ideas of a Turkish-Muslim by appealing to all sections of the society, including minorities and the marginalized to remain focused on not losing its hard base.

When speaking to a German publication, Davutoğlu stated that “politics and faith should be kept strictly separate” and that his goal was not to topple Erdoğan but to restore democracy, freedom of expression, the rule of law, and the separation of powers in Turkey (Arsu & Popp, 2021). There is an implicit suggestion being made that Islam’s role in politics in Turkey is a contributing factor to what he perceives as a deterioration of democracy. Yet, when speaking in Turkish, Davutoğlu uses Islamic rhetoric to his political benefit. This narrative mirrored Akşener’s 2022 statement to *Hürriyet Daily* when the chairwoman said, “Democracy is a most precious right of the Turkish people [...] we will govern Türkiye in the light of knowledge and science” (2022). Similarly, Davutoğlu’s statement appealed to Turkish voters to use what their minds and knowledge require to reject the AKP’s invoking of Allah and the Quran as the power source to reject interest.

In an interview with *Sözcü* in 2020, Ali Babacan, leader of the DEVA Party, made statements in a similar vein othering conservative Turkish Muslims. Like Davutoğlu, Babacan also was a former member of the AKP. Babacan, a founding member of the AKP, served as the economy and foreign minister from 2002-2009 before serving as deputy prime minister between 2009 to 2015. Babacan resigned from the AKP in 2019, citing “deep differences” over the party’s direction (Pitel, 2019), and formed DEVA in March 2020. The following statement was extracted from an interview

conducted by İsmail Saymaz, a well-known Turkish journalist at the Gaziantep Congress in 2020. He notes:

There are neither "bearded uncles looking for a mosque" like in conservative parties, nor are there any religious slogans. Bearded people are more than bearded, uncovered women are more than covered... When I told Babacan, "I don't have the impression of a conservative party," he replied: We have no such claim, thank goodness [...] There are parties that define it this way. These parties appeal to a narrow audience. If the support it receives from them is high, it excludes the other segment. We don't want to do that. No matter how bad the government has done for non-conservative segments of the society, it is negative for both conservatism, religiosity, and Islam (Saymaz, 2020).

The relationship between "bearded uncles looking for a mosque" in conservative parties which Babacan proudly asserts that he has no claim to, is an example of how Turkish media represents Islam and Muslims through a racialization of the majority, often denigrating their clothing, manners, style, and way of living (Yel, 2022). Language informs reality and the denigration; in this instance, it is aimed at the beards of conservative Muslim men. The visibility of the Turkish Muslim's beard remains a threat to secular elites not strictly as an expression of religious meaning but as an ideological challenge to non-conservative segments of Turkish society and what they consider to be an acceptable outward portrayal of conservatism, religiosity, and Islam, which Babacan claims the government has negatively impacted. These kinds of media statements not only "otherize" conservative Muslims but refashion an image of Islam that needs to be reformed by political leaders like Babacan. Otherwise, it will remain narrow and exclusive-minded.

The reinforcement of Islamophobic media statements made by political elites, especially those that once were associated with the AKP, can have detrimental effects on policy decisions and can fuel discriminatory sentiments that negatively shape public opinion on conservatism. When political leaders engage in Islamophobic rhetoric, it can perpetuate stereotypes and promote a climate of suspicion and dismissal. This can lead to the formulation of policies that misappropriate Islamic concepts in the name of inclusivity and democracy which may hinder effective policymaking by diverting attention from real issues by perpetuating a climate of hostility towards conservative Turks. When political elites engage in Islamophobic rhetoric, it often becomes a focal point of Turkish public discourse and overshadows important discussions on

substantive policy matters and real fears conservative Turks have about secular elites coming back into power.

This diversion of attention, often in the form of hyperbole, hinders constructive dialogue and allows for Turkish political elites to prioritize divisive measures rather than implementing inclusive Islamic policies that promote social cohesion between conservative and secular segments of society and address genuine concerns.

Contrastingly, the constellation of the opposition also contains prominent Islamist Temel Karamollaoğlu, leader of the Felicity Party (SP), who regularly uses Islamic rhetoric in complete contradiction to other opposition members. In a media speech at the Anatolian Youth Association reported on by Sözcü, Karamollaoğlu stated that:

We are people of faith, we are Muslims. As Muslims, our first duty at the foundation of our faith is to believe in Allah and follow in the footsteps of His Messenger. But now we are on the way of the Prophet. Whichever Islamic geography you look at, Muslims are oppressed. Even Muslims are killing each other. We just watch what happens. If we had acted as required by Islam, there would have been an atmosphere of peace in the world (Sözcü, 2019).

Karamollaoğlu's statements are almost completely juxtaposed to most of the opposition's Islamic rhetoric. Rather than framing Islam as the obstacle to democracy, Karamollaoğlu framed Islam as the solution altogether and deviance from the *sunnah* as the root problem. Therefore, his positionality in the "Table of Six" may reflect increased discontent with the AKP, or a strictly strategic move rather than further alliance building.

2.5 CONCLUSION

The purpose of the chapter is to shed light through media analysis on how political elites in Turkey manipulate Islamic rhetoric for their own political goals, appealing to conservative constituencies while criticizing the AKP and its policies. The chapter employed CDA to explore how Islamic concepts and narratives help construct and perpetuate specific discourses that affect public opinion and policy decisions. The methodology involved analyzing media statements from the "Table of Six" to argue that the opposition's use of Islamic rhetoric can be seen as a strategic tool to attract support and present their parties as more aligned with authentic Islamic values despite their diverse ideological positions. Furthermore, the chapter explores the role of media in

amplifying and filtering this rhetoric, potentially leading to Islamophobia, misappropriation, and sensationalism in public discourse. The analysis ultimately emphasizes the complex relationship between Islam, politics, and rhetoric in Turkish society, highlighting both the benefits and potential drawbacks of employing Islamic rhetoric within a political context.

Understanding the political motivations of the “Table of Six” is of utmost importance to make sense of their Islamic rhetoric and media statements. Political communication is not simply a matter of words but a reflection of deeper ideologies, interests, and strategies. By delving into the type of rhetoric used by the opposition and the sociopolitical context of Turkey, we gain crucial insights into the driving forces behind using Islam to advance their agenda. Moreover, this understanding allows us to critically analyze the messages that empower Turkish citizens to be informed consumers of political information, especially regarding their faith and Islamic rhetoric, enabling them to see beyond the surface-level narratives and recognize potential biases or manipulations. Ultimately, unraveling the different ways Islamic rhetoric is used helps us navigate the complex political landscape in Turkey with greater discernment, contributing to a more informed understanding of the development and boundaries of Islamophobia.

CHAPTER THREE

THE NORMALIZATION OF ISLAMIC RHETORIC ACCORDING TO FOUCAULT'S THEORY OF POWER

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In the following chapter, I propose a theoretical framework that collaborates Michel Foucault's ideas regarding the intricate dynamics of power in media production and political rhetoric, particularly concerning the dynamics between the secular legacy of media ownership and the AKP regime in Turkey. Foucault's exploration of power and his concept of the normalization of power are central to understanding how power operates in society through normalization, regulation, and control processes. Foucault's theory highlights the dispersion of power, which influences acceptable Islamic rhetoric in Turkish media, constrains political discourse, shapes Turkish-Muslim identity, and perpetuates Islamophobic biases through secular media legacies. This dispersion of power underscores how media functions as a discipline technology within the broader apparatus of power and explores the nuances of power relations in Turkish society and the role of Islamic rhetoric in the media in shaping the Turkish-Muslim identity. The chapter highlights that Islamic rhetoric is not neutral but is strategically employed to appeal to a Turkish-Muslim audience and consolidate political power, reflecting a broader power-knowledge correlation and the construction of normative discourses.

The chapter further illustrates how Foucault's theory offers valuable insights into the role of media ownership and production in shaping power dynamics within Turkish society. It examines secularists historical dominance of media ownership which propagated and normalized certain ideologies, discourses, and norms that influence public perceptions. The AKP's rise to power disrupted this media hegemony by incorporating similar tactics, revealing that media is not a neutral conduit but a contested space for power relations. The chapter emphasizes how media institutions establish norms, standards, and "regimes of truth" that guide content creation and public understanding. This power-knowledge nexus influences how Turks perceive their own Muslim identity and understand the role of Islam in politics. Furthermore, the chapter discusses the role of media professionals in shaping public knowledge and perceptions, and how media institutions contribute to subjectification, the process by which

individuals internalize societal norms and values. By applying Foucault's concepts, the chapter encourages critical engagement with power dynamics, resistance to dominant narratives, and the potential for transformative change through more inclusive and Islamic media practices.

3.2 NORMALIZATION OF POWER

Michel Foucault, a prominent French philosopher and social theorist, extensively explored the concept of power throughout his works and provided valuable insights into understanding the power dynamics within media production and political rhetoric. One of his main ideas is about the normalization of power, which refers to how power operates in society through processes of normalization, regulation, and control. Foucault's theory on the normalization of power challenges traditional notions of power as a top-down force wielded by a few individuals or institutions. Instead, he argues that power is dispersed throughout society and operates through subtle discipline, surveillance, and normalization mechanisms. This power dispersion influences the boundaries of acceptable Islamic rhetoric in Turkish media and constrains the range of Islamic reform and alternatives that are voiced by Turkish politicians in the opposition. It also shapes the construction of Islamic knowledge, the perception of Turkish-Muslim identity, and the reproduction of Islamophobic tropes and biases. A Foucauldian perspective sheds light on how Islamic rhetoric in the media can function as part of the “apparatus of technologies of domination” (Markula & Pringle, 2006), with media as a technology of discipline.

Foucault's theory on the normalization of power offers a nuanced and insightful understanding of how power operates in society and how power relations shape political discourse, influence public opinion, and contribute to the construction of social realities in Turkey. By examining the disciplinary practices, the establishment of norms, and the shaping of subjectivities, Foucault unveils the subtle and pervasive ways in which power exercises control and maintains social order. His theory challenges traditional notions of power and opens up avenues for critical analysis that can be applied to better understand the Turkish opposition's usage of Islamic rhetoric across media statements and power. Understanding and critically engaging with the normalization of power can help understand why the opposition is limited to discourses on Islam, and challenge

Islamophobic statements and power structures aiding the Turkish opposition. Foucault's theory sheds light on how power relations shape media content, influence Islamic discourse, and contribute to the construction of social reality in Turkey.

This operates on two levels. The first concerns how the normalization of power applies to Islam and the AKP regime and why the opposition's discourse is limited to Islam because of that. The second is concerned with the historical secular legacy of media ownership in Turkey. Foucault's theory discusses the significance of discursive power. It can be applied to political statements about Islam that are embedded within media power structures that have been historically owned by secularists and shaped by prevailing norms, ideologies, and narratives. This type of normalization of power applies to the ways the media can ridicule or marginalize politicians who challenge dominant narratives or propose policy solutions rooted in Sharia, as seen in the media statements and the opposition's discourse against the AKP. They are not merely a neutral expression of ideas held by the Turkish opposition. This normalization of power limits the diversity of Islamic perspectives and narrows the scope of political discourse, reinforcing existing secular power structures and inhibiting transformative change.

According to Foucault, power is not solely repressive but also productive. It does not merely suppress or prohibit certain behaviors, but actively shapes and molds individuals and social norms. In his influential work "Discipline and Punish" (1975), Foucault examines the disciplinary techniques used in modern institutions, which can be applied to the AKP, and why the opposition has to engage with Islamic rhetoric in the political arena. He argues that these institutions function as mechanisms of power that normalize and regulate individuals' behavior, thereby maintaining social order and control. Although Turkey has a rich history of secularism, the AKP's emergence in the early 2000s accompanied a gradual incorporation of Islamic values into political discourse. The instrumentalization of Islam for political gain to garner public support regarding constitutional changes, such as the lifting of the headscarf ban and the incorporation of more Islamic content in curricula, exemplifies the normalization of Islam for strategic purposes. This was furthered through the government's control over religious institutions including the Directorate of Religious Affairs (*Diyanet*) which contributed to the shaping of a Turkish-Islamic discourse that aligns with the objectives of the AKP.

3.3 TURKISH-MUSLIM IDENTITY

This institutional normalization process normalized the role of Islam within state functions and reinforced the idea that Islamic values are integral to Turkish identity. Also, since Foucault argues that power produces knowledge and truth, this power-knowledge correlation influences the construction of Islamic rhetoric and its impact on the discourses surrounding Islam in Turkey. The form of political Islam advocated by the AKP combines two ideological traditions: Islamic conservatism and nationalism. By de-legitimizing the Republic's vision of secular Turkish nationalism, the AKP re-interpreted the dominant version of Turkish national identity as an Islamic one that currently prevents the opposition from completely diverging from Islam in the political arena because of the role it maintains in the imagination of Turkish-nationalism and identity. The normalization of power emphasizes the role of societal institutions in shaping and producing subjectivities and the internalization of societal norms.

However, by creating and disseminating specific political messages and narratives, the opposition can influence how Turks perceive their own "Muslimness" and others, reinforcing Islamophobia in Turkey. This form of objectification, which formed a part of the basis of Foucault's inquiry, interrogates how man learns to call himself the subject of some practice, in this case, the Muslim nation of Turkey. This mode of objectifying is a form of power that applies itself to the immediate everyday life of a Turkish Muslim, which seeks to impose a law of truth on him "which he must recognize, and which others have recognized in him. It is a form of power which makes individuals subjects" (Foucault, 1978). According to Foucault, man can become an "individual" if he is conscious of those power relations and can resist them. Therefore, Turks and academics alike need to be conscious of Islam's nuanced relation to power in Turkey and the ways Islamic rhetoric is a form of objectifying power.

Foucault referred to this process as *subjectification*, the process by which individuals "think about themselves, act for themselves, and transform themselves within power relations" (Rail & Harvey, 1995). Foucault stated that subjectification can be realized by what he labeled "technologies of the self" (Foucault, 1990). These technologies emerge in the process of "forming of oneself as a subject within power relations" (Thorpe, 2008). According to Foucault, examine how individuals make sense

of “moral” codes around them and react. This sheds insight into how Islamic rhetoric impacts how Turks react and make sense of Islamic norms and their corresponding moral codes. Although Foucault stressed that these practices are not something invented by the self; rather, they are “patterns [she] finds in [her] culture and which are proposed, suggested and imposed on [her] by [her] culture, [her] society and [her] social group” (McNay, 2013). How Turks understand Islamic rhetoric and make meaning of the discursive construction of Islam by both the AKP and the opposition is informed by the broader social context and understandings of secularism, Turkish-Islamic nationalism, sharia, and politics. This conception of the self represents Foucault’s attempt to recognize the influence of the government and media rhetoric and his anti-essentialist view of the subject without dismissing the degree of agency and self-determination attributed to everyone (McNay, 2013).

Additionally, according to Foucault, there are historically three types of struggles: struggle against subjection, as discussed, struggle against exploitation, and struggle against domination. In his view, the struggle against subjection has become more important, given the state’s role as a source of both totalizing and individualizing power. Foucault states that the Western state, also understood more broadly as the nation-state, has integrated old techniques of power from Christianity through what he calls “pastoral” power. This power that cannot be “exercised without knowing the inside of people’s minds, without exploring their souls” (Foucault, 1978) and “it is linked with a production of truth, the truth of the individual himself” (Foucault, 1978). Similarly, Islamic rhetoric cannot wield power without Islam and without a population that considers it their truth. This “pastoral” power can also be understood as a “pious” power. The Islamic rhetoric in Turkey by the opposition often attacks the piety of its targets and how “true” Islam is. A new political ordering of life that centered Islam rather than opposed it was possible because of the rise of the AKP, but it also became a concern for secular Turks because of the need to employ political Islam while simultaneously producing a peculiar regime of truth through Islamic rhetoric that serves the opposition’s interests.

3.4 ROLE OF THE MEDIA: MEDIA OWNERSHIP

The second way power is normalized in Turkey is through the secular legacy of media ownership. Historically, the media landscape has been predominately owned and operated by seculars in Turkey to disseminate discourses, ideologies, and norms that govern how Turkish citizens understand themselves and their place in society. Media was often aligned with Kemalist ideals and ownership was concentrated in conglomerates that used media outlets to defend and promote secularist principles. Atatürk was responsible for establishing the first Turkish news agency, *Anadolu Ajansı* and voices that were critical of the regime were silenced. According to Çatalbas (2007), a “large portion of the Turkish press wholeheartedly supported the ruling ideology, Kemalism, and perceived itself responsible for the preservation of it,” and this trend continued well into the 90s, with “many examples of the ethically dubious campaign[s]” (Sæter, 2006).

Turkish media has historically played a significant role in disciplining, constructing, and perpetuating certain Islamic identities, Islamic values, and Islamic behaviors through the connection between business and politics. These media institutions, often owned by wealthy Turkish businessmen, produce subjectivities that align with prevailing power structures, reinforcing and reproducing the existing power relations. One prominent example is businessman and media baron Aydın Dogan of the Dogan Group, Turkey’s biggest media conglomerate and the owner of *Hurriyet* newspaper. Until April 2001, The Dogan Group, along with another major group, controlled 80 percent of the Turkish media sector (Tunç, 2003). Dogan has “more than once been suspected of having a political agenda which he has used his media outlets to front” (Sæter, 2006). The media is controlled by a handful of private individuals who “have a consensus about these macro principles. This is in politics too, not only in economics. They are secular, and they have a pro-EU view” (Sæter, 2006)

However, media ownership has also been a contention with the AKP’s rise to power. The rise of the AKP challenged the media hegemony. It incorporated similar tactics through their own messaging, showing that media is not a neutral source in Turkey from either perspective. A small number of vertically integrated industrial conglomerates, often aligned with the AKP regime and influential religious groups, now exert significant control over the Turkish media markets. Despite the nominal liberalization of the media market, the prevailing dominance of these conglomerates,

influenced by political, economic, and historical dynamics, maintains a high concentration level and lacks effective ownership controls.

3.5 ROLE OF THE MEDIA: MEDIA AND NORMALIZATION

One of the key ways powers operate in the normalization process is through disciplinary practices that enforce hierarchical observation, examination, and evaluation to produce docile bodies and obedient subjects. Power exercises control by inducing self-regulation and internalization of societal norms. Similarly, this understanding applies to Salman Sayyid's definition of Islamophobia as a form of racialized governmentality as a systematic disciplining of 'Muslimness' that operates within broader power dynamics and institutions. Media institutions, such as news organizations, television networks, and film studios in Turkey, are characterized by hierarchical structures, internal surveillance and control mechanisms with secular legacies of concentrated ownership. These institutions employ disciplinary practices to shape the public's understanding of Islam through the very rhetoric of Islam which is often nuanced and contains "multiple discursive elements" that "can come into play in various strategies" (Foucault, 1978). Therefore, cultural and social understandings surrounding the historical interplay of Islam and politics in Turkey cannot be divided into pro-Islam and anti-Islam. Instead, through these disciplinary techniques, power is exercised to produce Islamic rhetoric, not exclude it, that aligns with the established norms, ideologies, and narratives of the opposition if seculars own the media. Turkish audiences confront numerous discourses and although secular media and secular elites undoubtedly influence the negotiation of Islamic rhetoric, these negotiations "do not produce a simple dominating discourse" (Pringle & Markula, 2005) of Islam. Instead, Islamic rhetoric constantly evolves depending on the power structures and each party's agenda. The language used in political statements is carefully crafted to appeal to a Turkish-Muslim audience, promote certain understandings of Islam, and consolidate power. Through discursive power, Islamic rhetoric influences public opinion and mobilizes support accordingly.

Furthermore, the normalization of power also operates through establishing norms and standards that define what is considered "normal" or "deviant" behavior within political discourse. The operationalization within media production of these

power-knowledge relations produces norms expressed through Islamic rhetoric and define what is considered “authentic” within the Islamic faith. These power dynamics influence how Turkish Muslims are expected to practice their faith, conform to Turkish societal expectations and express nationalized constructions of Turkish-Islamic nationalism. Turks who deviate from these norms may face stigmatization, be labeled as extremists, or be socially “othered”. As well as influencing the Turkish manifestation of cultural meaning, the mediated dialogue surrounding Islam through Islamic rhetoric also influences the way we frame our cultural understandings of future politicians. Foucault’s theory highlights the role of disciplinary practices in shaping Islamic understandings that regulate and control Islam’s application politically and socially. This disciplinary power reinforces the perception that conservative Turkish Muslims and the AKP have misunderstood ‘true’ Islam and contributes to the construction of Islam as a problem that needs to be controlled and managed to preserve the secularity of Turkey.

3.6 ROLE OF THE MEDIA: MEDIA DISCOURSE, ISLAM, AND POWER

Additionally, media professionals play a crucial role in constructing and disseminating knowledge, narratives, and representations that shape public understanding of social issues. Foucault argues that power produces knowledge and truth, and these norms and standards are socially constructed through discourses and practices of power. Foucault introduces the concept of "regimes of truth" which refers to the dominant discourses and knowledge frameworks that are accepted as legitimate within a society. He did not conceptualize relations of power as necessarily positive or negative, and it would be erroneous to assume that Islamic rhetoric in Turkey is inherently used in Islamophobic ways; however, statements that align with these regimes of truth are more likely to be accepted, disseminated, and given legitimacy, while those that challenge or deviate from these norms may face resistance or marginalization. The normalization of power can limit the diversity of interpretations and practices within Islam, especially if they contradict secular economic or social norms, narrowing the understanding of the religion in Turkey and perpetuating stereotypes and biases about Islam’s role in politics.

For example, the secular Turkish media and secular elites play a significant role in defining what is considered acceptable religious and “Islamic” by othering AKP supporters and signifiers of Islam in politics. This power-knowledge nexus not only

establishes norms but also creates the conditions for the exercise of power by categorizing Turkish Muslims and establishing the boundaries of what is acceptably conservative or Islamic. Political statements loaded with Islamic rhetoric establish and reinforce what norms, values, and ideologies align with the opposition's agendas. By framing issues, defining political problems, and proposing solutions through Islamic rhetoric, the Turkish opposition exerts power over how Islam's relation to justice, democracy, and human rights in Turkey is perceived and understood. The language used in political statements is carefully crafted to appeal to Turkish audiences; Islamic rhetoric is used to promote certain ideas, whether those ideas are Islamic or not, and consolidate power. Through this discursive power, secular political elites influence public opinion, shape collective memory, and mobilize support for their agendas. By appealing to emotions, fears, and aspirations, political statements shape individuals' desires, aspirations, and actions. They play a crucial role in constructing and reproducing subjectivities that align with prevailing power structures, reinforcing power distribution and maintaining social order (Thompson, 1998).

According to Foucault's theory on the normalization of power, power relations can also influence access to information and shape the availability and visibility of different perspectives. This form of gatekeeping can exert power through Islamic rhetoric by media organizations and secular elites through agenda-setting and limiting the diversity and viewpoints that advocate for more conservative understandings of Islam. This can influence the information Turkish voters internalize about their faith and impact their decision-making process.

Foucault's theory emphasizes how media institutions, often influenced by dominant ideologies and interests, establish norms that guide the creation and presentation of media content. These norms dictate the representation of individuals, communities, and events, shaping public perceptions and reinforcing or challenging existing power dynamics. They participate in creating discourses that define social realities and influence public opinion. This power over knowledge production influences how Islamic issues and AKP decisions are understood, discussed, and acted upon, potentially reinforcing existing power structures threatened by more Islamic understandings or reform. Turkish society's understanding of Islam is not formed in a neutral vacuum but is shaped by discourses presented by the media and political elites. This relation also plays a crucial role in defining what is considered legitimate Islamic

knowledge or a valid Islamic historical narrative, influencing Turkish public perception. For example, as previously discussed in Chapter Two, media representations of “bearded uncles” and drawing comparisons between the Prophet Muhammad (s) and Atatürk can perpetuate stereotypes, marginalize certain groups, or reconstruct historical narratives, thereby exerting significant power in shaping social realities.

3.7 POLARIZED POWER RELATIONS

Furthermore, Foucault argues that power operates through a network of power relations rather than being held exclusively by particular individuals or institutions. Power is not something possessed but exercised and negotiated in social interactions (Daldal, 2014). According to Foucault, power is “omnipresent”. It is not something that is acquired, seized, or shared, but rather, it is exercised from many different points. It is present in everyday practices, relationships, and discourses, shaping individuals' thoughts, desires, and actions that draw attention to the interplay between AKP and opposition supporters in Turkey. This diffusion of power means that resistance to power is not confined to grand acts of rebellion but can manifest in everyday subversion through Islamic rhetoric. Foucault's theory on the normalization of power has significant implications for understanding contemporary society and the operation of power within it. It challenges the traditional understanding of power as solely coercive and reveals how power operates more subtly and more pervasively. Foucault did not see power relations as binary or superstructural but rather power comes from below and relations are intentional and non-subjective (1978). By examining the normalization of power, Foucault directs our attention to the micropolitics of everyday life, the disciplinary mechanisms that shape our behavior, and the complex interplay between power, knowledge, and subjectivity.

Moreover, Foucault's theory highlights the importance of critical engagement and resistance to power. Critical thought is at the core of the Foucauldian approach to the technologies of the self. Foucault (1984) analyzed how people learn to problematize their identities by becoming more self-aware and self-reflexive. By understanding the normalization processes and power dynamics, Turkish voters can become more aware of the mechanisms of control and develop strategies for challenging and transforming how Islam is represented in political discourse through the opposition. Foucault's work

encourages us to question and interrogate the dominant norms, discourses, and institutions that shape our lives, fostering a more critical and emancipatory approach to power. A Foucauldian analysis allows us to understand how Islamic rhetoric is used and sheds “light [on] power relations, locating their position, [and] finding out point applications and methods used” (Foucault, 1978). However, Foucault stated that although strategic coordination of resistance is necessary for institutional change, resistance will only ever “reconfigure – not dissolve – power relations” (Maguire, 2002). By applying Foucault's concepts, we can critically analyze the usage of Islamic rhetoric in media representations, challenge dominant narratives, and work towards more inclusive and Islamic media practices that can reconfigure power relations according to Islam rather than merely through the rhetoric of Islam.

3.8 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the key objectives of the chapter involve unraveling the concept of the normalization of power, dissecting its influence on the construction of Turkish-Muslim identity, and scrutinizing the role of media ownership in shaping power dynamics within Turkish society. Through Foucault's lens, the chapter provides invaluable insights into the dispersed nature of power, the tactics of normalization, and the mechanisms by which power shapes and is shaped by media content. The chapter highlights the significance of Foucault's concept of power normalization, revealing that power operates not as a monolithic force wielded by a few but as a dispersed and subtle mechanism. This perspective offers an insightful understanding of how power influences acceptable Islamic rhetoric, constrains political discourse, and perpetuates Islamophobic biases in the Turkish media landscape. Additionally, Foucault's emphasis on the role of media ownership and production opens new avenues for comprehending the dynamics of power within Turkish society. It demonstrates how media institutions establish norms and standards that guide content creation, influence public opinion, and contribute to forming Turkish-Muslim identity.

Furthermore, the chapter underscores that media professionals play a crucial role in shaping the knowledge, narratives, and representations that define public understanding of social issues, reinforcing or challenging existing power dynamics. The chapter illuminates the complexities of political discourse and identity formation within

Turkey by analyzing the normalization of power and its impact on Islamic rhetoric. It emphasizes that understanding power's influence on media content creation, knowledge production, and subjectification can foster critical engagement and resistance. By applying Foucault's concepts, the chapter encourages a transformative approach to media practices, challenging dominant narratives and envisioning a more inclusive representation of Islamic discourse. Through its exploration of power dynamics and their manifestations within media and politics, the chapter contributes to a deeper understanding of Turkish society's intricate interplay between power, Islamic rhetoric, and identity construction in the opposition and society.



CHAPTER FOUR

THE AFFECT OF ISLAMIC RHETORIC ON NATIONAL INTERESTS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The Islamic discourses produced, expressed, and legitimated through the political rhetoric of the opposition can influence Turkish citizens' attitudes toward national interests. There are a variety of factors that influence the reactions of Turkish Muslims to the opposition including the interplay between political Islamic rhetoric and national identities which underlie the synonymity between Islamic values and social conservatism in Turkey. In other words, these factors influence how the Turkish-Islamic identity is dynamic and socially constructed. Understanding how Turkish public opinion reacts to the opposition's usage of Islamic rhetoric has key political implications for the evolution of Islamic discourse and Turkish national interests that have both been shaped and influenced by a series of critical historical moments, ranging from the rise of Kemalism to the election of the AKP. Over the years 2013-2022, Turkey faced a range of challenges that have become issues of national interest, including refugee immigration, economic hardship, and COVID-19. In the absence of a sample to directly observe the effects, this research will attempt to hypothesize the effects from the years 2013-2022 by analyzing how the opposition's universal usage of Islamic discourse and distancing themselves from an authoritarian understanding of secularism (rooted in the Atatürk era) has legitimized their power. Given the rise of public dissatisfaction with inflation rates and socio-economic conditions, Islamic discourses legitimated through political rhetoric provided a prime platform for the opposition to reconcile with conservative religiosity and gain the necessary support to legitimate and influence their national interests.

4.2 NATIONAL INTEREST

Firstly, it is important to clarify what the term 'national interest' means and its role in the theories of international and domestic politics. The concept of national interest remains relevant because of its explanatory role in state action, although its analytical

usefulness has been debated. For a variety of reasons, many scholars have denounced the concept as “a weapon that saps democratic processes” (Clinton, 1986) and “oversimplified and wrongheadedly dogmatic (Hoffman, 1978). However, this research agrees with those who argue that the notion of national interests remains central to explaining state actions and is “the main signpost that helps political realism to find its way through the landscape of international politics” (Morgenthau, 1978). It is the language of state action and is important in two ways. National interest in practice forms the basis for state actions and allows policymakers and citizens alike to understand the goals of the state. It also “functions as a rhetorical device through which the legitimacy of and political support for state action are generated” (Weldes, 1996). Therefore, it has the power to legitimize actions and classify what constitutes as important to the state. This research will understand national interest as a social construction that emerges out of processes of representation that create meaning. According to Weldes (1999):

Before state officials can act for the state, they engage in a process of interpretation to understand both what situation the state faces and how they should respond to it. This process of interpretation presupposes a language shared, at least by state officials involved in determining state action and by the audience for whom state action must be legitimate. This shared language is that of the national interest. The content of the national interest is produced in or emerges out of a process of representation through which state officials make sense of both their domestic and international contexts.

This process of representation and construction is created through linguistic and cultural resources, like the media and Islam, which serve to populate the national and the international world with a variety of objects that are given an identity and represent well-defined relations among these objects, which often appear in the form of quasi-casual arguments. Although these relations may not necessarily be empirically valid, their importance is in their ability to provide “warranting conditions” that make certain actions or beliefs more “reasonable”, “appropriate”, or “justified” given the existing desires, expectations, and beliefs of the actors (Fay, 1975). When these warranting conditions are provided, actors can specify which objects are threats and which must be protected. The concept of national interest and the representations created by state officials, therefore, makes it clear “who and what ‘we’ are, who and what ‘our enemies’ are, in what ways ‘we’ are threatened by ‘them’ and how ‘we’ might best deal with those ‘threats’” (Weldes, 1996).

4.3 NATIONAL INTERESTS AND ISLAM

At the outset, it is notable to recognize that the opposition is employing Islamic rhetoric within an environment of conservative nationalism, not political Islamism. Islam is central to the conception of Turkish identity; constituents are traditionally Turkish nationalists and social conservatives and the AKP is not an Islamist party, despite how it is frequently described as such (Taşpınar, 2012). Regardless of party lines, Islam plays a central role in defining Turkish national interests, interests which are best understood as social constructions. Politicians often define these interests to legitimize their actions, consolidate support, and justify their political agendas.

Generally, the term 'national interest' describes "what is best for a nation", which is typically defined by the rulers' character, values, worldview, etc. (Rosenau, 2006). However, the definition of national interests cannot be limited to a single dimension because there are multiple components including economy, military, politics, and technology that play a role. Conclusive evidence would necessitate a formal survey experiment to study how Islamic rhetoric in Turkish media affects Turkish citizens' self-reported perceptions of national interest priorities. However, we can compare the typical rhetorical devices used and elucidate the uses of historical references as arguments to justify a particular version of Turkish-Islamic identity, given the national interests of the time. In the absence of a formal survey, this research will examine the effect on how the Turkish populace perceives the opposition in contrast to the AKP based on the opposition's efforts towards party differentiation through their political positions on national issues. Given the conservative nationalist context, how the opposition focuses on various issues becomes an effect since both sides are converging to the center-right, and employing Islamic rhetoric is a similarity, not a difference, with the AKP. These impacts will be examined through available opinion polls and vote shares from 2013-2022 to determine whether Islamic discourse has increased or decreased support for the opposition.

Beetham (2013) stated that for power to be considered legitimate, it is necessary for it to conform to established rules; the rules themselves can be justified by references to shared beliefs, and expressions of power can be recognized by acts that mark this recognition. Legitimacy can be eroded, challenged, or incomplete; however, these three complementary levels offer constituents the moral foundations for their cooperation with rulers. According to social identity theory, politics are refracted in people's minds

through the powerful lens of national identity (Tajfel, 1981; Tajfel and Turner, 1979). In the case of the opposition, these shared beliefs are Turkish-Islamic notions of national identity, and Islamic political discourse can be considered an act that marks this recognition. Resistance to Islam and a return to militant Atatürkism would signal delegitimization for the opposition; however, by utilizing Islamic rhetoric, the opposition can successfully distance itself from its past to garner public trust, especially in times of turmoil.

4.4 REFUGEE MIGRATION AND NON-INTERFERENCE

After the outbreak of the Syrian civil war, Turkey welcomed approximately 4 million refugees and implemented an integration policy framework to provide humanitarian aid and empower refugees in their new lives. However, the refugee inflow did not come without new challenges being posed on Turkey's social and economic fabric. AKP regularly references the Prophetic concept of hijra (ensar-muhacir) and a duty to welcome Muslim brothers into Turkey (Saylan & Aknur, 2023), by invoking a sense of ummatic unity and stressing the transnational Islamic identity in response to national frustrations about the Syrian influx. In juxtaposition, the opposition stresses the Turkish nationalist identity, but they are simultaneously careful not to marginalize Syrians with a secular stance or dismiss the concept of ummah. Kılıçdaroğlu's statement exemplifies this "We will send our Syrian brothers to their country in peace. When we are in power with the permission of Allah, I will solve the Syrian problem" (CHP E-Bülten, 2021). His statement confirms the universal agreement among the opposition that it was a mistake for Turkey to become involved in the domestic affairs of Syria and to depart from Turkey's policy of noninterference while emphasizing the same ummatic sense of brotherhood and reference to Allah's power. In a post-pandemic environment of economic hardship, runaway inflation, and dramatic depreciation of the Turkish currency, Turkey's policies on the Syrian issue were brought to center stage. The backdrop of this political environment, in combination with the opposition's usage of Islamic rhetoric over the years and the distancing from militant secularism, has placed them in a strategically favorable position to influence national interests and Turkish public opinion.

As discussed previously, the opposition regularly expresses Islamic rhetoric in its political dialogue. Given this political context, it is unlikely that the memory of practices in the Ataturk era will be remembered when Turkish-nationalist and anti-refugee sentiments are invoked, or that the opposition will be perceived as enemies of the ummah. Rather, it is more likely to be an affirmation of the political oppositions' uniform belief that it was a mistake to venture into Syria's domestic affairs, and as a preservation of Turkish national interests and social identity. According to the CHP's Çeviköz, the departure from the principle of noninterference was, in reality, a diplomatic double standard for the AKP to exclusively focus on the human rights issues it deemed crucial rather than a foreign policy agenda that protected human rights and fundamental freedoms on a global scale (Coşkun & Ülgen, 2022). He criticized the AKP for not being more critical of the treatment of Uyghurs in China and claimed that the CHP would have been, stemming from their belief in universal human rights that "ensure consistency in foreign policy and eradicate double standards" (Coşkun & Ülgen, 2022). This adoption of an Islamically-based humanitarian discourse can remain connected with the Turkish public by expressing concern for the affairs of the global ummah while also advocating for the opposition's foreign policy by presenting it as more balanced. It is important to note that this is not a one-way strategy. The AKP's adoption of an Islamically-based humanitarian discourse is also shaped by the party's ideological preferences. However, those preferences are not able to serve a populace that is increasingly harnessing anti-refugee sentiments and trumpeting racist discourse on immigration. These factors may further legitimize support for the opposition and their influence on national interests, such as Syrian repatriation.

Another factor legitimizing support for the opposition and its influence is the current economic condition of Turkey. The AKP's hegemony has been largely dependent on the party's ability to maintain economic growth; however, in a climate where inflation rates reached all-time highs and prices were twice as high as they were in 2021, strong civil dissatisfaction emerged. Many blamed Erdoğan's unorthodox economic policies, such as slashing interest rates, as responsible, contributing to the widespread disenchantment with the ruling party. In the last few years, support for Erdoğan decreased due to currency crashes and a deepened cost of living (Wilks, 2023). These factors allow the opposition to have more of an effect on national interests and public opinion by introducing policy platforms that promise reintroductions to Turkey's

traditional and orthodox economic policies. These policies, they argue, will counteract AKP's low interest rates and the determent of foreign investors. For instance, Kılıçdaroğlu stated that the CHP will work to regain the confidence of foreign investors (Uras, 2023), implying that the AKP is responsible for that loss of confidence.

However, "some academics are also skeptical of claims about the national interest, noting that they operate primarily at the level of rhetoric" (Humphreys, 2015). When the opposition claims that a policy or statement is in the national interest of Turkey, this may merely be a way to garner public support with no actual impact on national interests, particularly in the wake of election periods. To evaluate political statements such as those made by Kılıçdaroğlu, we need to examine two basic patterns of reasoning that underpin national interest claims and that can be promoted through political rhetoric: reformist and conservative (Humphreys, 2015). Reformist reasoning identifies desirable national interests and how best to promote the said interests in the future or at present. Conservative reasoning identifies existing national interests and the political rhetoric and policies that promote them, assuming that said policies will continue to adapt to changing circumstances and be in the national interest. The claim that Islamic discourse by the opposition can affect national interests lies in the premise that the rhetoric is likely to promote a widely accepted underlying goal of the Turkish nation. Therefore, it is important to examine both the goals Islamic discourse intends to advance and the means-end reasoning that links the rhetoric to fulfilling those goals in Turkey.

The usage of Islamic discourse by the opposition legitimizes their positionality with conservative voter bases, allowing the parties to project the fulfillment of goals through rhetoric to appease Turkish citizens dissatisfied with the AKP's recent handling of the government. Gezi protests showed that the opposition had little capacity to mobilize an effective political campaign to challenge the AKP. However, the political climate has changed, and the current economic situation is similar to what made the AKP's victory possible (Akal, 2021).

4.5 OPINION POLLS AND VOTE SHARE

Although more extensive research would need to be conducted to adequately assess how the opposition's usage of religious rhetoric has affected Turkish public support,

this research will examine whether Islamic discourse has increased or decreased support for the opposition based on available opinion polls and vote shares from the years 2013-2022. These observations will mainly focus on the CHP party since it is the longest-standing party currently in opposition to tracking and comparing earlier polls and election results.

Despite attempting ideological and organizational restructuring following the election of Kılıçdaroğlu as the chairman, the vote share in the first general election of this period (2015) confirmed the hegemony of the AKP. The CHP was unable to rid itself of the deep-rooted sentiment among Turkish society that it is “an unreliable party that is unaware of performance” and “distant to our [Turkish] values” (Gökmen, & Tosun, 2015). Three days before the election, opinion polls showed that the opposition parties of the CHP, MHP, and HDP only took 27.8 percent, 14.8 percent, and 12.6 percent, respectively, while the AKP led at 41 percent. This was based on a study conducted with 3,545 people across 30 provinces between May 30 and 31, 2015 (Bianet, 2015). Many voters felt alienated from the party, which was still seen throughout Turkey as an elitist party of the Atatürk era that was far from the average Turk’s Islamic and national identity and values. At the time, historical prejudices among the Turkish public against the CHP remained an obstacle, and the party failed to connect to voters. The election results a few days later confirmed the poll numbers both in the general election in June and Turkey’s November 2015 election, with the AKP and CHP closing in at 40.87 percent and 24.95 percent in June, and 49.50 percent and 25.32 percent in November, respectively. It is important to note, however, that the June election was the first time since 2002 that all four parties, three of which were the opposition (CHP, MHP, and HDP) passed the 10 percent election threshold and therefore gained seats in parliament. Shortly afterward, Erdoğan announced that snap elections would be held since the parties failed to come to a coalition agreement, and the AKP formed the government with 317 out of the 550 seats in parliament (Daily Sabah, 2019). Although the AKP won the snap elections, this was a significant turning point and foreshadowed an increased support to come, despite the opposition’s low results in the polls overall.

In 2018, three years later, the polls bore a similar divide to the June 2015 elections (yet support for Erdoğan had begun to soften given that Turkey’s economy had entered a recession for the first time since the rise of the AKP). According to a survey conducted by Mediar across 26 provinces and 4,268 people, AKP’s predicted

vote share was 43.5 percent of the votes in the first round of presidential elections and the survey predicted that the CHP would receive around 22 percent (Cumhuriyet, 2018). The actual election results reflected poll expectations, with the AKP leading at 42.56 percent in the general election, followed by the CHP at 22.65 percent, and the HDP, MHP, and İyi parties significantly behind at 11.70 percent, 11.10 percent, and 9.96 percent respectively. These figures from the opposition suggest that from 2015-2018, the CHP partially lost support and could not change its image, although it was the first time since the rise of the AKP that the opposition gained seats in the parliament. The CHP won 146 seats in Turkey's 600-member legislature, making it the body's second-largest bloc, and it was also the year that the CHP formed the Nation's Alliance with the İyi Party to run against the AKP.

However, only a year later, the local elections in March 2019 “delivered one of the most stunning results in recent memory” (Yildirim, 2019) when the AKP lost major ground. Two of the most crucial defeats came from the mayoral races in Istanbul and the capital, Ankara, two cities that the AKP has carried in every election since 1994 yet lost to the CHP. These losses challenged the dominant cleavage between secularists and Islamists. Additionally, the AKP's losses in key major cities across Turkey in 2019 may indicate that the usage of Islamic rhetoric and appeal to conservative voters had begun to affect the Turkish public and the CHP's image was changing. Although the AKP won the metropolitan municipalities overall at 44.06 percent, the CHP lost by a significantly smaller margin than in previous years, rising to almost 30 percent (Daily Sabah, 2019). This suggests that the CHP's ideological and organization restructuring plan of 2015 had begun to succeed and it was positioning itself as a party to challenge the hegemony of the AKP.

Table 4.1 Vote Share Results of Opinion Polls and Elections in Turkey from the Years
2015-2019

Year	Party	Opinion Polls (%)	General Election (%)			
2015	AKP	41	June	40.87	November	49.50
	CHP	27.8		24.95		25.32
	MHP	14.8		16.29		11.90
	HDP	12.6		13.12		10.76
2018	AKP	43.5	42.56			
	CHP	22	22.65			
	MHP		11.10			
	HDP		11.70			
	İyi		9.96			

	Party	Local Elections (%)	# of Metropolitan
		Metropolitan Municipalities	Municipalities Won
2019	AKP	44.06	15
	CHP	29.14	10
	MHP	5.18	1
	HDP	4.15	3
	İyi	9.52	0

4.6 CONCLUSION

The intricate interplay between Islamic discourses, political rhetoric, and the shaping of national interests in Turkey reveals a complex dynamic that has evolved in a historically charged and evolving landscape. This chapter focused on how the opposition's use of

Islamic rhetoric may have influenced Turkish citizens' attitudes toward national interests, in combination with various socio-economic factors, such as immigration and the recession.

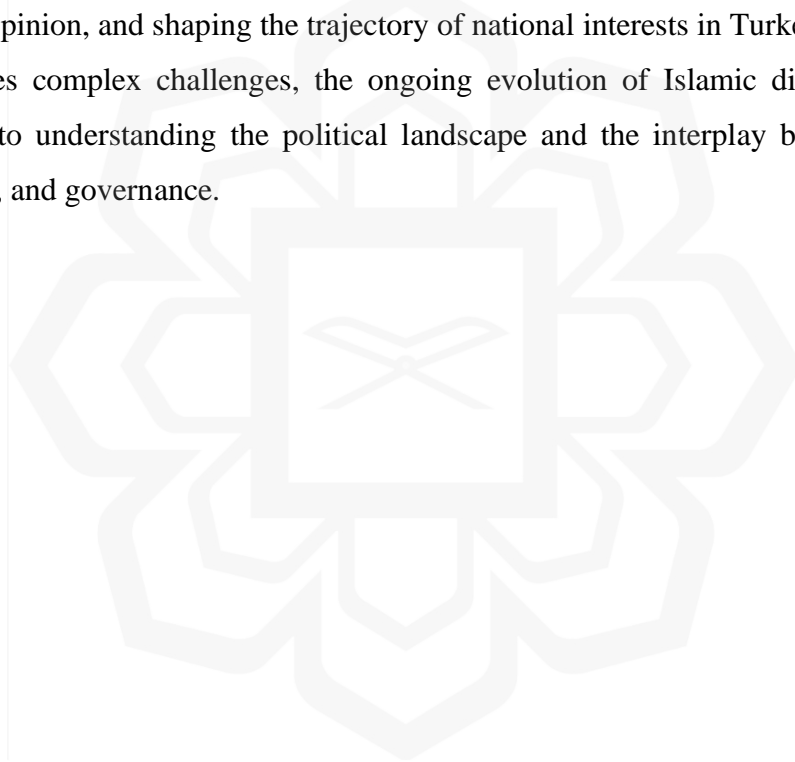
The concept of national interest is a multifaceted and socially constructed phenomenon that emerges through processes of representation, shaping how state officials interpret and respond to domestic and international contexts and the role of Islamic discourse in shaping political narratives. Weldes (1999) emphasizes the role of a shared language—the national interest—that state officials and the public use to make sense of their surroundings. This language, in turn, functions as a rhetorical device, legitimizing state actions and generating political support. The representations created through linguistic and cultural resources, such as media and Islam, construct a national identity and delineate perceived threats and protections.

In Turkey, the definition of national interests is dynamic and influenced by the interplay between political Islamic rhetoric, national identities, and domestic challenges. The evolution of Turkey's national interest narrative from 2013-2022 reflects the ongoing construction of a Turkish-Islamic identity. This identity, shaped by Islamic values and social conservatism, has become synonymous with national interests. Understanding this social construction is crucial for comprehending how the opposition legitimizes their actions and garners public support.

Islamic discourse, employed by the opposition within a framework of conservative nationalism, plays a pivotal role in shaping Turkish national interests. The opposition strategically utilizes Islamic rhetoric not as political Islamism but within the broader context of Turkey's traditional Turkish-Islamic identity. Islam is deeply ingrained in the conception of Turkish identity, and both the ruling AKP and the opposition employ religious rhetoric to legitimize their positions. Examining specific national issues, such as refugee migration, reveals how Islamic discourse influences the framing of policies and shape's public opinion. The opposition's emphasis on Turkish nationalist identity, coupled with Islamic references, allows them to navigate challenges like the Syrian refugee crisis and capitalize on the AKP's shortcomings. By distancing themselves from an authoritarian understanding of secularism rooted in the Ataturk era, the opposition gains a strategic advantage in influencing national interests during economic hardship and social dissatisfaction.

Furthermore, analysis of opinion polls and election results from 2013 to 2022 provides insights into the evolving public perception of the opposition's use of religious rhetoric. Despite initial challenges and historical prejudices, the opposition, particularly the CHP, has positioned itself as a formidable force against the AKP. The strategic use of Islamic discourse aligns with the conservative sentiments of the Turkish public, especially during times of economic downturn and dissatisfaction with the ruling party.

In conclusion, the synthesis of Islamic discourses, political rhetoric, and national interests in Turkey underscores the dynamic nature of identity construction and political influence. The opposition's use of Islamic rhetoric within a conservative nationalist context has become a powerful tool for legitimizing their positionality, influencing public opinion, and shaping the trajectory of national interests in Turkey. As the nation navigates complex challenges, the ongoing evolution of Islamic discourse remains central to understanding the political landscape and the interplay between religion, identity, and governance.



CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter will conclude the study by summarizing the key research findings in relation to the aims and questions and discuss the overall findings in relation to the research questions and objectives. Furthermore, the chapter will also review the limitations of this research and propose future opportunities. This research examines the use of rhetoric by secular opposition leaders in Turkey from the opposition bloc of the “Table of Six”. While Islamophobia has been widely studied, its exploration within Muslim-majority nations, particularly Turkey, where an Islamist party has been in power since 2002, remains limited and this research focused on the opposition’s potential role in fostering Islamophobia within the society.

The historical roots of Islamophobia in Turkey are rooted in Kemalist policies aimed at disassociating the state from Islam. The study identifies the evolution of explicit to subtle forms of Islamophobia employed by the secular opposition, ultimately seeking to diminish Islam's influence in public life. The problem statement highlights the historical context, emphasizing the role of Kemalists in shaping the Turkish political landscape and sidelining Islam while the research questions aim to uncover the nature of Islamic rhetoric, its normalization in power dynamics, and its impact on national interests. This research’s significance lies in shedding light on the persistence of divisions between Turkish-Islamic tradition and secularist politics and addressing the potential threats posed by Islamophobia to religious Turkish Muslims in the public sphere.

5.2 SUMMARY

This research delved into the discourse of secular elites in the opposition, analyzing media statements from 2013-2022, a period marked by the Gezi Park protests. These protests, though lacking a coherent political agenda, triggered new dynamics of Islamophobia within the opposition's rhetoric. The absence of in-depth investigations into the impact of this Islamophobic discourse on Turkish Muslim society is addressed,

with a focus on its manifestation in media and political rhetoric. This research specifically looked at using Islamic rhetoric employed by the "Table of Six," an opposition alliance formed in Turkey in 2022. Despite their internal ideological differences, the members shared the goal of a system overhaul and aimed to overturn the presidential system and reinstate parliamentary governance.

The Turkish opposition's use of Islamic rhetoric between 2013 and 2022 can be analyzed through various themes and rhetorical strategies employed by the opposition alliance known as the "Table of Six." This alliance comprised six political parties with diverse ideological backgrounds, including the Republican People's Party (CHP), the Good Party (İyi), the Democratic Party (DP), the Felicity Party (SP), and two splinter parties from the AKP, namely the Future Party (GP) and the Democracy and Progress Party (DEVA). The types of Islamic rhetoric that the opposition utilized spanned five main themes: the distortion of Islamic concepts, manipulation through rhetorical devices, reconstruction of historical narratives, misappropriation of Islamic concepts, and orientalist tropes. The opposition distorted Islamic concepts to appeal to conservative voters and criticize the ruling AKP, except for the Felicity Party's leader, Temel Karamollaoğlu, who presented a distinct Islamic narrative. By manipulating traditional Islamic beliefs, the opposition could present itself as the protector of Islamic values, contrasting its stance with the AKP's perceived shortcomings.

Furthermore, the "Table of Six" utilized rhetorical devices such as hyperbole, irony, metaphor, analogy, and parallelism to shape public opinion. These devices allowed them to control narratives, cast themselves as champions of justice and moral integrity, and present the AKP as morally and politically flawed. Additionally, by combining Turkish history with Islamic rhetoric, the opposition constructed a form of secular Turkish-Islamic nationalism. This framing and historical narrative reconstruction allowed them to promote their agenda aligned with the nation's history while criticizing the AKP for its deviations. Opposition parties combined Islamic concepts with Turkish history to legitimize their positions. This approach often involved contrasting the AKP's policies with Islamic teachings and presenting themselves as the true protectors of Islamic values. Lastly, the opposition occasionally relied on orientalist thinking, constructing a dichotomy between the "good" and "bad" Muslims. This approach framed the AKP and its supporters as backward and extreme while positioning the opposition as moderate and rational.

Throughout this period, the opposition's use of Islamic rhetoric was complex and multifaceted. They used language to persuade conservative voters while critiquing the AKP's approach to governance. For example, leaders like Meral Akşener of the Good Party criticized AKP's stance on military operations in Syria, presenting herself as a protector of true Islamic values. Similarly, Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu of the CHP attempted to position his party as a defender of justice and religious freedoms, particularly in relation to issues such as the wearing of the headscarf.

The significance of rhetoric in politics is highlighted, emphasizing its role in shaping relationships between political elites, media, and the public. The research underscores the symbiotic relationship between media and rhetoric, suggesting that the opposition strategically uses Islamic rhetoric to attract support and portray alignment with authentic Islamic values while exploring the media's impact on public perception of Islam's role in politics and raises concerns about potential Islamophobia, misappropriation, and sensationalism in public discourse. Rhetorical devices are viewed as linguistic means to persuade citizens on specific political positions and play a central role in political discussions, agenda-setting, and decision-making. Understanding how politicians configure appeals using Islamic rhetoric is crucial, especially in a media-dominated landscape where messages are disseminated rapidly. Such rhetoric can influence policy decisions, perpetuate stereotypes, and shape public opinion, hindering constructive dialogue and diverting attention from substantive issues. However, the opposition's use of Islamic rhetoric also had potential drawbacks. By employing these strategies, they risked perpetuating Islamophobic narratives and reinforcing existing stereotypes about the relationship between Islam and politics. This could contribute to the polarization of Turkish society and the obscuring of nuanced debates about the role of Islam in the country's political landscape.

Chapter three also delved into the theoretical framework proposed by Michel Foucault, focusing on the dynamics of power in the context of media production and political rhetoric to answer the question of how Islamic rhetoric is normalized according to Foucault's framework. Foucault's concept of the normalization of power serves as a central theme, exploring how power operates through processes of normalization, regulation, and control and how this dynamic influences Islamic rhetoric, political discourse, and the construction of Turkish-Muslim identity, specifically examining the secular legacy of media ownership and its interactions with the AKP regime in Turkey.

The interplay between political Islamic rhetoric and national identities in Turkey highlights the synonymy between social conservatism and Islamic values. The opposition's employment of Islamic rhetoric within an environment of conservative nationalism demonstrates awareness that Islam plays a central role in defining the socially constructed interests of Turkey. The interplay between secular media legacies and the AKP regime in Turkey influences the boundaries of acceptable Islamic rhetoric, constrains political discourse, and shapes Turkish-Muslim identity where Islam is central to the conception of Turkish identity. The opposition recognizes that to legitimize their actions, consolidate support, and justify their political agendas, Islamic rhetoric is advantageous and necessary within a nationalist conservative state. Constituents are traditionally Turkish nationalists and social conservatives, and although the opposition's aims are Islamophobic, it is only through the use of Islamic rhetoric that they will gain influence.

Furthermore, Foucault's theory of the normalization of power emphasizes its nuanced understanding of power as dispersed throughout society, operating through subtle mechanisms of discipline and normalization. This dispersion of power is shown to impact Islamic rhetoric in Turkish media, influencing acceptable discourse, shaping Turkish-Muslim identity, and perpetuating Islamophobic biases inherited from secular media legacies. The historical dominance of secularists' media ownership is examined, highlighting its role in propagating and normalizing certain ideologies. The AKP's rise disrupted this media hegemony, revealing media as a contested space for power relations. Media institutions are portrayed as influential in establishing norms, standards, and "regimes of truth" that guide media content creation and public understanding. Media professionals play a crucial role in shaping public knowledge and perceptions, contributing to subjectification, the process by which individuals internalize societal norms and values. This, in turn, influences how Turks perceive their own Muslim identity and understand the role of Islam in politics.

Additionally, this study argues that Islamic rhetoric is strategically employed to appeal to a Turkish-Muslim audience and consolidate political power, illustrating a power-knowledge correlation in the construction of normative discourses. It emphasizes that Islamic rhetoric is not neutral but operates within the broader apparatus of power, contributing to subjectification—the internalization of societal norms and values. Foucault's theory is also applied to the normalization of power concerning Turkish-

Muslim identity, discussing how the AKP's incorporation of Islamic values into political discourse has normalized Islam for strategic purposes. The interplay between power, Islamic rhetoric, and the construction of Turkish-Muslim identity is explored, emphasizing the impact on societal institutions and subjectivities. Foucault's theory of normalization demonstrates how Islamic rhetoric is strategically employed by both the AKP and the opposition to appeal to a Turkish-Muslim audience and consolidate political power. This process reflects a broader power-knowledge correlation and the construction of normative discourses. This research argues that Islamic rhetoric is not neutral but shaped by the prevailing power structures, ideologies, and narratives.

Furthermore, Foucault argues that power operates through a network of relations rather than being held exclusively, with power being omnipresent in everyday practices. The diffusion of power is discussed in the interplay between AKP and opposition supporters, suggesting that resistance to power can manifest in everyday forms of subversion through Islamic rhetoric. This includes media professionals, who are depicted as crucial in shaping public knowledge and perceptions, contributing to subjectification and internalizing societal norms. The concept of "regimes of truth" highlights dominant discourses accepted as legitimate within society, influencing the perception of Islamic issues and AKP decisions. Foucault's theory encourages critical engagement and resistance to power. It highlights the importance of questioning dominant norms, discourses, and institutions to foster a more critical and emancipatory approach to power. According to Foucault, power is not solely repressive but also productive, actively shaping individuals and social norms. The research examines how the AKP's rise to power and its incorporation of Islamic values into political discourse exemplify the normalization of Islam for strategic purposes. Additionally, the control over religious institutions like the Directorate of Religious Affairs (*Diyanet*) has contributed to the shaping of a Turkish-Islamic discourse that aligns with the objectives of the AKP.

This chapter suggests that a Foucauldian analysis can lead to more inclusive and Islamic media practices, challenging dominant narratives and reconfiguring power relations. The chapter unravels the concept of the normalization of power, scrutinizing its impact on Turkish-Muslim identity and exploring the role of media ownership in shaping power dynamics. Foucault's lens provides valuable insights into the dispersed and subtle nature of power, shedding light on the complexities of political discourse,

media practices, and identity formation in Turkish society. The chapter encourages critical engagement, resistance, and transformative approaches to media practices, contributing to a deeper understanding of the intricate interplay between power, Islamic rhetoric, and identity construction in Turkey.

Lastly, chapter four explores the intricate relationship between Islamic discourses, political rhetoric, and the shaping of national interests in Turkey to understand how national interests are affected. It highlights the dynamic nature of Turkish national identity, influenced by political Islamic rhetoric, historical contexts, and socio-economic challenges. The analysis period spans across a time marked by critical events such as the refugee crisis, economic difficulties, and the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite being debated among scholars, the concept of national interest is considered central to explaining state actions. It is a shared language that state officials use to interpret and respond to domestic and international contexts. As Weldes (1999) argues, this shared language functions as a rhetorical device, legitimizing state actions and generating political support. National interest refers to the goals and objectives of a state as it navigates both domestic and international contexts. It also provides the language and framework for policymakers and citizens to understand the aims and actions of the state. The chapter emphasizes that national interest is a socially constructed phenomenon emerging from processes of representation through linguistic and cultural resources like media and Islam.

In the Turkish context, the chapter contends that the definition of national interests is dynamic, shaped by the interplay between political Islamic rhetoric, national identities, and domestic challenges. Islam plays a central role in shaping Turkish identity and, by extension, national interests and Turkish national interests have been historically influenced by a series of critical moments, from the rise of Kemalism to the rise of the AKP. Therefore, how the opposition uses Islamic rhetoric in their political discourse can potentially influence Turkish citizens' views on what is considered in the national interest. The opposition has had to navigate the tension between conservative nationalism and political Islamism by distancing itself from secularism while using Islamic rhetoric to appeal to conservative segments of the population. This has allowed the opposition to challenge the AKP's dominance and position itself as a viable alternative. The opposition strategically uses Islamic discourse within a framework of

conservative nationalism, distancing itself from authoritarian secularism associated with the Atatürk era.

Examining specific issues, such as refugee migration, illustrates how Islamic discourse influences policy framing and public opinion. The opposition, by emphasizing Turkish nationalist identity and incorporating Islamic references, navigates challenges like the Syrian refugee crisis. This strategic use of rhetoric allows them to capitalize on public dissatisfaction with the ruling AKP, particularly during economic hardships. Following the Syrian civil war, Turkey has hosted approximately 4 million refugees. The AKP has used Islamic rhetoric, including references to the Prophetic concept of *hijra (ensar-muhacir)*, to justify its welcoming of Syrian refugees. However, the opposition stresses Turkish nationalist identity and criticizes Turkey's involvement in the Syrian conflict. By striking a balance between Turkish nationalism and Islamic values, the opposition gains legitimacy and support from citizens who are frustrated by the refugee influx. The opposition capitalizes on this by promising a return to traditional and orthodox economic policies, implying that the AKP's policies are responsible for economic decline. This strategy aligns with conservative sentiments and has strengthened the opposition support.

The analysis of opinion polls and election results from 2013 to 2022 reveals the evolving public perception of the opposition's use of religious rhetoric. Despite historical prejudices and initial challenges, the opposition, especially the CHP, positions itself as a formidable force against the AKP. The strategic use of Islamic discourse aligns with conservative sentiments, especially during economic downturns and dissatisfaction with the ruling party. In conclusion, the synthesis of Islamic discourses, political rhetoric, and national interests in Turkey underscores the dynamic nature of identity construction and political influence. The opposition's use of Islamic rhetoric within a conservative nationalist context emerges as a powerful tool for legitimizing their position, influencing public opinion, and shaping national interests. As Turkey faces complex challenges, the ongoing evolution of Islamic discourse remains central to understanding the political landscape and the interplay between religion, identity, and governance.

5.3 DISCUSSION AND LIMITATIONS

As noted earlier, there are limitations to using Islamophobia as a framework and its intersection with the development of Islamic political consciousness in Turkey. There is also a potential for bias and manipulation in presenting Islamic rhetoric, emphasizing the complex relationship between Islam, politics, and rhetoric in Turkish society. Another limitation of this research is the absence of survey experiments and data that would provide conclusive evidence to examine how Islamic rhetoric in Turkish media has affected Turkish citizens' perceptions of national interest priorities, opinions on the opposition, and shifts in power dynamics. This research is limited to existing media statements related to Islam by the opposition from 2013-2022 which cannot adequately capture its influence. Furthermore, it is important to critically analyze the data gathered for this research in relation to other reports available to guarantee that subjective analyses were interpreted in a way that best reveals the impact of the opposition's rhetoric on Turkish-Muslims and national interests rather than relying on polls and vote share. Further research would require another qualitative method rather than CDA that would suitably incorporate quantitative research. Indeed, the analysis of Islamophobic content of the opposition's messages is the first step to identity-shifting public perception, but it is also crucial to examine how the phenomenon is perceived by the Turkish people to understand its performative implications.

Additionally, the media landscape in Turkey is heavily distorted, biased, and driven by both Islamophobic attitudes and AKP's political ideology rather than being grounded in the principles of justice, evidence-based analysis, and democratic reform. Political elites in Turkey on both sides of the spectrum must promote inclusive and respectful discourse in the media that focuses on addressing genuine challenges rather than misappropriating Islamic concepts to other conservative parties and Muslims, or in the ruling parties' case, advancing its political agenda.

REFERENCES

- Akner, N., & Mencet, M. S. (2016). Türkiye’de İslamofobi: Mizah dergilerinde İslam’ın temsili. *Akademik İncelemeler Dergisi*, 11(2).
- Akal, D. (2021, November 17). Türkiye Kritik Bir Sürece Giriyor. Deutsche Welle Türkçe. <https://www.dw.com/tr/bat%C4%B1%C4%B1-uzmanlarga%C3%B6re-t%C3%BCrkiye-kritik-bir-s%C3%BCrece-giriyor/a-59842026>
- Akyol, M. (2019). Turkey’s Troubled experiment with secularism. *Citizenship and Its Discontents: The Struggle for Rights, Pluralism, and Inclusion in the Middle East*. The Century Foundation Press.
- Alam, A. (2009). Islam and post-modernism: Locating the rise of Islamism in Turkey. *Journal of Islamic Studies*, 20(3), 352-375.
- Anadolu Ajansı. (2023, April 23). *Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan: Ev Kadınlarımızın emekliliğine destek Vereceğiz*. Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan: Ev kadınlarımızın emekliliğine destek vereceğiz. <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/gundem/cumhurbaskani-erdogan-ev-kadinlarimizin-emekliligine-priminin-3te-birini-odeyerek-destek-verecegiz/2879251>
- Arsu, Ş., & Popp, M. (2021, July 20). *Former Turkish prime minister Ahmet Davutoğlu: “Parts of the government are Mafia-like.”* DER SPIEGEL. <https://www.spiegel.de/international/world/interview-with-former-turkish-prime-minister-ahmet-davutoglu-parts-of-the-government-are-mafia-like-a-b52b1435-fc24-4300-baf5-94b3a34ea196>
- Asad, T. (2003). *Formations of the Secular*. Stanford University Press.
- Asad, T. (2019). Secular translations. In *Secular Translations*. Columbia University Press.
- Aslan, A. (2018). The politics of Islamophobia in Turkey. *Islamophobia in Muslim majority societies*.

- Atlas, M. I. (2018, June 22). *Who is the champion of the pious in Turkey?* Daily Sabah. Retrieved October 25, 2022, from <https://www.dailysabah.com/columns/meryem-ilayda-atlas/2018/06/23/who-is-the-champion-of-the-pious-in-turkey>
- Bayraklı, E., & Hafez, F. (Eds.). (2016, March). *European islamophobia report 2015*. Seta.
- Bayram, F. (2010). Ideology and political discourse: A critical discourse analysis of Erdogan's political speech. *Arecls*, 7(1), 18.
- Bewley, A. A. (2015). *Democratic tyranny and the Islamic paradigm*. Diwan Press.
- Bianet Press Agency. (2015, June 5). The latest opinion polls announced by Konda. <https://bianet.org/haber/the-latest-opinion-polls-announced-by-konda-165082>
- Bilge, Y. (2023, November 2). *Religion, nationalism, and populism in Turkey under the AKP*. Middle East Institute. <https://www.mei.edu/publications/religion-nationalism-and-populism-turkey-under-akp>
- Çarmikli, E. S. (2011). *Caught between Islam and the West: secularism in the Kemalist discourse* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Westminster).
- Catalbas, D. (2007). Freedom of press and broadcasting. *Human Rights in Turkey*, 19-34.
- CHP Lideri Kılıçdaroğlu: Suriyeli kardeşlerimizi huzur içinde kendi ülkelerine göndereceğiz. (2021). *CHPe Bülten*. <https://chp.org.tr/haberler/chp-lideri-kilicdaroglu-suriyeli-kardeslerimizi-huzur-icindekendi-ulkelerine-gonderecegiz>
- Condor, S., Tileagă, C., & Billig, M. (2013). Political rhetoric. In L. Huddy, D. O. Sears, & J. S. Levy (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of political psychology* (2nd ed., pp. 262–297). Oxford University Press.
- Corbin, J., & Strauss, A. (2014). *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory*. Sage publications.

- Coşkun, A., & Ülgen, S. (2022). Political change and Turkey's foreign policy. *Carnegie Endowment*, 14. <https://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/galeri/son-secim-anketi-hangi-parti-yuzde-kac-oy-aliyor-982380>
- Dalacoura, K. (2017). 'East' and 'West' in contemporary Turkey: threads of a new universalism. *Third World Quarterly*, 38(9), 2066-2081.
- Daldal, A. (2014). Power and Ideology in Michel Foucault and Antonio Gramsci: A Comparative Analysis.
- Davutoğlu, A. [@Ahmed_Davutoğlu]. (2021, December 31). Erdoğan "Onların doları varsa bizim de Allah'ımız var" safatasından sonra bugün de "Faize karşı silahımız nasdır" buyurmuş [Tweet]. Twitter. https://twitter.com/Ahmet_Davutoğlu/status/1476980531673903108
- Duran, B. (2019). The crisis of the liberal world order and Turkey's resistance. *Insight Turkey*, 21(3), 8-22.
- Duran, B. (2022, June 9). *An ideological showdown over the Gezi riots*. SETA Foundation. Retrieved October 26, 2022, from <https://www.setav.org/en/what-will-the-gezi-park-protests-change/>
- Esen, B. (2022). The opposition alliance in Turkey: a viable alternative to Erdoğan?. Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik -SWP- Deutsches Institut für Internationale Politik und Sicherheit.
- Farooq, U. (2021, December 3). *Lira crash slams Turkey's factories, farmers and retailers*. Business and Economy News | Al Jazeera. Retrieved October 26, 2022, from <https://www.aljazeera.com/economy/2021/12/3/lira-crash-slams-turkeys-factories-farmers-and-retailers>
- Feyzioğlu, T. (1992). Türk İnkılabının Temel Taşı: Laiklik. *Atatürk Yolu*, 2.
- Fillingham, L.A. (1993). Foucault for beginners. Danbury, CT: Writers and Readers, Inc.
- Fırat, E. C. (2022). Gültekin Uysal: "Siz giderseniz hukuksuzluk biter, siz giderseniz yolsuzluk biter, siz giderseniz yoksulluk biter." PolitikYol.com | Yorum, Analiz,

Haber Sitesi. <https://www.politikyol.com/gultekin-uysal-siz-giderseniz-hukuksuzluk-biter-siz-giderseniz-yolsuzluk-biter-siz-giderseniz-yoksulluk-biter/>

Foucault, M. (1975). *Discipline and punish*. A. Sheridan, Tr., Paris, FR, Gallimard.

Foucault, M. (1980). *Power/knowledge: Selected interviews and other writings, 1972-1977*. Vintage.

Foucault, M. (1984). Interview: Polemics, politics, and problematizations. *Foucault Reader*, 381-390.

Foucault, M. (1990). The history of sexuality: An introduction, volume I. *Trans. Robert Hurley*. New York: Vintage, 95, 1-160.

Gee, J., & Gee, J. P. (2007). *Social linguistics and literacies: Ideology in discourses*. Routledge.

Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. L. (2017). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. Routledge.

Glynos, J., Howarth, D., Norval, A., & Speed, E. (2009). *Discourse analysis: Varieties and methods*.

Gökmen, Y. C., & Tosun, T. (2015). The CHP in the June and November 2015 elections: An evaluation on political impasse. *Insight Turkey*, 17(4), 193.

Göl, A. (2009). The identity of Turkey: Muslim and secular. *Third World Quarterly*, 30(4), 795-811.

Gole, N. (2015). *Islam and Secularity: The Future of Europe's Public Sphere*. Duke University Press. 77-78.

Guibernau, M. (2004). Anthony D. Smith on nations and national identity: a critical assessment. *Nations and Nationalism*, 10(1-2), 125-141.

Gunn, T. J. (2004). Under God but not the scarf: The founding myths of religious freedom in the United States and laïcité in France. *J. Church & St.*, 46, 7.

- Hafez, F. (2019). *Islamophobia in Muslim majority societies*. E. Bayraklı (Ed.). Abingdon-on-Thames: Routledge.
- Hallaq, W. (2012). *The impossible state: Islam, politics, and modernity's moral predicament*. Columbia University Press.
- Humphreys, A. (2015). How do we decide what is in the national interest?. *British Politics and Policy at LSE*.
- Hürriyet Daily News. (2022, October 5). *Democracy is most precious right of Turkish people: Akşener - Türkiye News*. Hürriyet Daily News. <https://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/democracy-is-most-precious-right-of-turkish-people-aksener-177469>
- İlker A. (2004). Turkish Linguists against the West: The Origins of Linguistic Nationalism in Atatürk's Turkey. *Middle Eastern Studies*, 40(6), 1–25. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4289950>
- Jones, P., & Krzyzanowski, M. (2008). Identity, belonging and migration: Beyond constructing 'others'. *Identity, belonging and migration*, 17, 38-53.
- Kanat, K. (2013, July 2013). *What will the Gezi Park Protests Change?* SETA Foundation. Retrieved October 26, 2022, from <https://www.setav.org/en/what-will-the-gezi-park-protests-change/>
- Kane, J., & Patapan, H. (2010). The artless art: Leadership and the limits of democratic rhetoric. *Australian Journal of Political Science*, 45(3), 371-389.
- Kara, İ. (2019). *Cumhuriyet Türkiyesi'nde bir mesele olarak İslâm: 1*. Dergah Yayınları.
- Knott, E. (2017). Nationalism and belonging: introduction. *Nations and Nationalism*, 23(2), 220-226.
- Krebs, R.R., & Jackson, P.T. (2007). Twisting Tongues and Twisting Arms: The Power of Political Rhetoric. *European Journal of International Relations*, 13, 35 - 66.
- Maguire, J. (2002). Michel Foucault: Sport, power, technologies and governmentality. *Theory, sport & society*, 293-314.

- Mahmood, S. (2006). Secularism, hermeneutics, and empire: The politics of Islamic reformation. *Public culture*, 18(2), 323-347.
- Mamdani, M. (2002). Good Muslim, bad Muslim: A political perspective on culture and terrorism. *American anthropologist*, 104(3), 766-775.
- Markula, P., & Pringle, R. (2006). Foucault, Sport and Exercise: Power, Knowledge and Transforming the Self.
- Martin, R., & Wodak, R. (2009). The discourse-historical approach (DHA). *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis. Los Angeles, London, New Delhi, Singapore, Washington DC: Sage*, 87-121.
- Massad, J. A. (2015). *Islam in Liberalism*. University of Chicago Press.
- McNay, L. (2013). *Foucault and feminism: Power, gender and the self*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Meeker, M. (2002). *A nation of empire: The Ottoman legacy of Turkish modernity*. Univ of California Press.
- Mullet, D. R. (2018). A general critical discourse analysis framework for educational research. *Journal of Advanced Academics*, 29(2), 116-142.
- Olmati, A. (2019). Master of Arts Thesis Euroculture.
- Ozouf, M. (1976). *La fête révolutionnaire* (p. 87). Paris: Gallimard.
- Pitel, L. (2019, July 8). *Ali Babacan resigns from Turkey's ruling AKP*. Ali Babacan resigns from Turkey's ruling AKP. <https://www.ft.com/content/14806d84-a179-11e9-974c-ad1c6ab5efd1>
- Rail, G., & Harvey, J. (1995). Body at work: Michel Foucault and the sociology of sport. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 12, 164-179.
- Relethford, J. H. (2009). Race and global patterns of phenotypic variation. *American journal of physical anthropology*, 139(1), 16-22.
- Runnymede, T. (1997). *Islamophobia: A challenge for us all*. London: Author.

- Sæter, K. (2006). *Watchdogs or lapdogs?: concentration of ownership in Turkish media* (Master's thesis).
- Saikal, A. (2003). Islam and the West. *Islamic Perspectives*, 19.
- Şar, E. (2023). The post-Erdoğan vision of Turkish opposition: opportunities and limitations. *Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik -SWP- Deutsches Institut für Internationale Politik und Sicherheit*.
- Saylan, İ., & Aknur, M. (2023). Discourses of Turkish Opposition Parties towards Syrian Refugees: Securitization and Repatriation. *Eskişehir Osmangazi Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*, 24(2), 259-283.
- Saymaz, İ. (2020, November 3). *Deva partisi Genel Başkanı Ali Babacan: Artık Erdoğan'ın Sokakta Yürümesi Kolay Değil*. Sözcü. <https://www.sozcu.com.tr/2020/yazarlar/ismail-saymaz/deva-partisi-genel-baskani-ali-babacan-artik-erdoganin-sokakta-yurumesi-kolay-degil-6109139/>
- Sayyid, S. (2014). A measure of Islamophobia. *Islamophobia Studies Journal*, 2(1), 10-25.
- Sayyid, S. (2014). *Recalling the Caliphate: Decolonisation and world order*. Oxford University Press.
- Sayyid, S. (2015). *A fundamental fear: Eurocentrism and the emergence of Islamism*. Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Schmitt, C. (2007). *The theory of the partisan*.
- Şentürk, R. (2010). State and religion in Turkey: Which secularism? In *State And Secularism: Perspectives from Asia* (pp. 319-337).
- Shaheen, K. (2018, January 21). *Turkey starts ground incursion into Kurdish-controlled Afrin in Syria*. The Guardian. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/jan/21/turkey-starts-ground-incursion-into-kurdish-controlled-afrin-in-syria>

- Shaheen, K., & Chulov, M. (2018, January 16). *Attack by Turkish forces on US-backed Kurds in Syria thought imminent*. The Guardian. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/jan/16/turkish-attack-on-us-backed-kurds-in-syria-believed-imminent>
- Sözcü. (2021, December 31). *Davutoğlu'ndan Erdoğan çıkışı: İslam İnancına Aykırı Zihniyet, Sapkın Görüş*. Sözcü. <https://www.sozcu.com.tr/2021/gundem/Davuto%9Flundan-Erdo%9Fan-cikisi-islam-inancina-aykiri-zihniyet-sapkin-gorus-6861350/>
- Tajfel H and Turner J (1979). An integrative theory of intergroup conflict. In: Austin W and Worchel S (eds) *The Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations*. Monterey, CA: Brooks/ Cole, pp.33–47.
- Tajfel, H. (1981). *Human groups and social categories: Studies in social psychology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Taşpınar, Ö. (2012). Turkey: The New Model? In Wright, R. (2012). *The Islamists are coming who they really are*. US Institute of Peace Press.
- Thompson, N. (1998). *Promoting equality*. Macmillan Education UK.
- Thorpe, H. (2008). Foucault, Technologies of Self, and the Media. *Journal of Sport & Social Issues*, 32, 199 - 229.
- Tunç, A. (2003). Faustian Acts in Turkish Style: Structural Change in National Newspapers as an Impediment to Quality Journalism between 1990–2003. *New Media in Southeast Europe*.
- Turkey elections: Turkey's Past Election Results. (2019) *Daily Sabah*. <https://www.dailysabah.com/election-results>
- T24. 2022. *Erdoğan: Bay Kemal, sıkıysa kalk bu havlayanları sustur; bu ülkede bizim dinimize, Diyanetimize saldıracak olanların hesabını sorarız*. [online] Available at: <<https://t24.com.tr/haber/Erdoğan-bay-kemal-sikiysa-kalk-bu-havlayanlari-sustur-bu-ulkede-bizim-dinimize-diyantimize-saldiracak-olanlarin-hesabini-sorariz,1006669>> [Accessed 6 June 2022].

- Uras, U. (2018, June 20). *United Against Erdogan: Turkey opposition's alliance of necessity?* Al Jazeera. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/6/20/united-against-erdogan-turkey-oppositions-alliance-of-necessity>
- Uras, U. (2023, May 11). *Turkey's elections: What are the key alliances promising?* Al Jazeera. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/5/11/turkeys-elections-what-are-the-key-alliances-promising>
- Van Dijk, T. A. (1995). Aims of critical discourse analysis. *Japanese discourse*, 1(1), 17-28.
- Van Dijk, T. A. (2006). Ideology and discourse analysis. *Journal of political ideologies*, 11(2), 115-140.
- Van Dijk, T. A. (2015). Critical discourse analysis. *The handbook of discourse analysis*, 466-485.
- Van Leeuwen, T. (2008). *Discourse and practice: New tools for critical discourse analysis*. Oxford University Press.
- Walker, R. B. (1993). *Inside/outside: International relations as political theory*. Cambridge University Press.
- Waxman, D. (1997). Islam and Turkish national identity: A reappraisal. *Mediterranean Quarterly*, 8.
- Wilks, A. (2023, May 29). *After Turkey election win, what problems does Erdogan face next?*. Al Jazeera. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/5/29/after-turkey-election-win-what-problems-does-erdogan-face-next>
- Williams, D. C., Young, M. J., & Launer, M. K. (2012). A methodology for analyzing political speech: Western approaches to rhetorical theory. *Журнал Сибирского федерального университета. Серия: Гуманитарные науки*, 5(12), 1744-1752.
- Weldes, J. (1996). Constructing National Interests. *European Journal of International Relations*, 2, 275 - 318.

- Yardıı, M., & Easat-Daas, A. (2018). Islamophobia in satirical magazines: A comparative case study of Penguın in Turkey and Charlie Hebdo in France. In *Islamophobia in Muslim Majority Societies* (pp. 93-106). Routledge.
- Yavuz, M. H. (2009). *Secularism and Muslim democracy in Turkey* (Vol. 28). Cambridge University Press.
- Yel, A. M., & Nas, A. (2014). Insight Islamophobia: Governing the public visibility of Islamic lifestyle in Turkey. *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 17(5), 567-584.
- Yel, A. M. (2021). Islamophobia as cultural racism. *Insight Turkey*, 23(2), 169-190.
- Yel, A. M. (2022). Islamophobia as a Phenotypical Racism: The Case of the Islamic Style of Clothing in Turkey. *Islamophobia Studies Journal*, 7(1), 12–24. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/48676233>
- Yildirim, A. K. (2019, April 3). *A turning point for Turkey's opposition?* Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. <https://carnegieendowment.org/sada/78767>
- Yılmaz, I. (2021). The AKP's Authoritarian, Islamist Populism: Carving out a New Turkey.