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**AN EXPERIENCE OF AN ISLAMIST CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATION WITHIN THE  
CHANGED DYNAMICS OF DEMOCRACY AND CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATION-  
STATE RELATIONS: THE CASE OF MAZLUMDER**

Yüksek Lisans Tezi

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## ABSTRACT

### AN EXPERIENCE OF ISLAMIST CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATION WITHIN THE CHANGED DYNAMICS OF DEMOCRACY AND CSO- STATE RELATIONS: THE CASE OF MAZLUMDER

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The concept of civil society has become popular, especially after post-1980 period in Turkey. Global political and economic developments such as the collapse of the Communist regimes, replacing with democracies and the rise of the neo-liberal economic system has made a positive impact on the democratization of Turkey. Although this process enabled Islamist civil society organizations to emerge and flourish as well as institutionalization and specialization starting from the 1950s, rivalry-based relationship was dominant with the state until 2000s. Especially after AK Party comes to power, transformation is observed in terms of the relationship between Islamist civil society organizations and state. This thesis analyzes the effect of democratization process over the Islamist civil society within the AK PARTY period. We explore experiences of one of the Islamic- oriented association, Mazlumder (Association for Human Rights and Solidarity for the Oppressed People), under the changing dynamics of democracy, state-civil society relations in Turkey through interviews with people from Mazlumder. Analyzing the experiences and opinions of members of Mazlumder help to make an inference about Islamist civil society organizations and state relations. This study is unique for investigating the position of Islamist civil society organizations in terms of democratization and state-civil society relations to one another Islamic-motivated civil society organization. The results of the interviews show that although civil societies, especially Islamist ones, has made positive progress, the traditional state-led character of civil society has not changed in Turkey.

Keywords: Civil Society, State, Islamist Civil Society, Democratization, Transformation, Mazlumder

## ÖZ

### İSLAMİ SİVİL TOPLUM ÖRGÜTÜNÜN TÜRKİYE’DE DEĞİŞEN DEMOKRASİ, SİVİL TOPLUM-DEVLET İLİŞKİLERİ DİNAMİKLERİ ÇERÇEVESİNDE DENEYİMİ: MAZLUMDER ÖRNEĞİ

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Sivil toplum kavramı, Türkiye’de özellikle 1980 sonrası dönemde popüler hale gelmiştir. Demoksilerin çöken Komünist rejimlerin yerini alması ve liberal ekonomik sistemin yükselmesi gibi küresel politik ve ekonomik gelişmeler, Türkiye’nin demokratikleşmesi üzerinde olumlu bir etki yarattı. Bu süreç, İslami sivil toplumun 1950’lerden başlayarak ortaya çıkıp gelişmesinin yanı sıra kurumsallaşma ve uzmanlaşmasına olanak sağlamasına rağmen, 2000’li yıllara kadar İslami sivil toplumla devletle aralarında rekabet temelli bir ilişki hakim oldu. Ancak, özellikle AK PARTY iktidara geldikten sonra, İslamcı sivil toplum ve devlet arasındaki ilişki açısından bakıldığında bir dönüşüm gözlenmektedir. Bu tezin amacı, demokratikleşme sürecinin AK PARTY döneminde İslamcı sivil toplum üzerindeki etkisini, İslami sivil toplum kuruluşlarından birisi olan Mazlumder’in (İnsan Hakları ve Mazlumlar için Dayanışma Derneği) değişen demokrasi ve sivil toplum-devlet ilişkileri dinamikleri altında deneyimlerini ve görüşlerini Mazlumder yetkilileri ile röportajlar yaparak araştırmaktır. Mazlumder’in deneyimlerini ve fikirlerini analiz etmek, İslami sivil toplum kuruluşları ve devlet ilişkileri hakkında çıkarımda bulunmak için kapı açmaktadır. Bu çalışma, İslami sivil toplum kuruluşlarının devlet-sivil toplum ilişkileri ve demokratikleşme açısından konumunu bir diğer İslami sivil toplumu kurucu tarafından değerlendirilmesi açısından özgündür. Mazlumder ile yapılan röportajın sonuçları, İslami sivil toplumun olumlu ilerlemeler kaydetmesine rağmen, Türkiye’de sivil toplumun geleneksel devlet önderliğindeki karakterinin değişmediğini gösteriyor.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Sivil Toplum, Devlet, İslami Sivil Toplum, Demokratikleşme, Dönüşüm, Mazlumder



To My Little Daughter Zeynep

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

The notion of civil society has become popular, especially after the 1980 period in Turkey, which lines with global political developments such as the collapse of communist regimes in Europe and replacement of it with democratic systems (Öztekin, 2009). Even though the collapse of communist regimes in Europe triggered the formation and promotion of democratic systems in other parts of the globe, other internal and external factors have much influenced democratization and rise of civil society in Turkey. Liberalism attempts and the EU process are the primary internal and external factors over the development of civil society in Turkey.

The emergence of Islamist civil society organizations, especially after the 1980s, has gained a speed under the AK PARTY period as parallel to their stable political power. Islamist and conservative groups have started to take a share more within the social sphere as compared to previous decades of Turkey both in terms of numbers and scope of fields. Some of these organizations have developed close relations with the state and institutions and sometimes worked as partners in several projects. They have become non-negligible shareholders in the civil society. The transformation has occurred within the Islamist civil society organizations in terms of their stance with the state. It was converted into peaceful, nonconflicting, and coherent type of relations rather than rivalry and conflictual. This transformation in relationships and increase the density of Islamist organizations within the civil society arena lead me to focus on Islamist organizations in terms of their relationship with the state and the effects of democratization over them.

As a result of doing a literature review over the issue of civil society-state relations with specific to Islamic civil society organizations, it is seen that there is a serious gap. Although state- civil society relations are frequently worked and discussed, there is no significant tendency and effort to focus on Islamist organizations. Especially under the AK PARTY period, the number, activity space, interaction with state and other civil society organizations (CSOs), and activity fields of Islamist organizations have raised, which has not experienced before. Islamisation of the society and rising democratic level through providing personal and institutional freedom to

suppressed actors as the most common arguments that I have come across in related literature. This study is unique for asking the position of Islamist civil society organizations in terms of democratization and state-civil society relations to one another Islamic-motivated civil society organization. In this way, this thesis fills the gap in related literature.

### **The Focus of the Study**

This thesis explores the effect of democratization process over the Islamist civil society within the period of AK PARTY governance through exploring experiences of one of the Islamic-oriented association Mazlumder (Association for Human Rights and Solidarity for the Oppressed People) under the changing dynamics of democracy, state-civil society relations in Turkey. I had interview with four members from İstanbul Branch of Mazlumder. Exploring the experiences and opinions of the members of Mazlumder, which open ways to make inference about the relationship between Islamist civil society organizations and state. Therefore, this study enables us to focus on various dynamics related to Islamist civil society organizations and civil society.

The research aims to understand whether the democratization of civil society through diversification in actors and identities change the state-dominated characteristic of state-civil society or not. By doing that, we examine how Islamist organizations as new actors in the social arena and having benefited from positive developments in democratization are located and influenced in this process. Therefore, further research and discussion will be fostered related to Islamist civil society.

The main research question of this study is: How does Mazlumder define their activity space with widening Islamist civil society organizations and consider the effects of democratization on NGOs? There are also sub-questions to have a well-grounded answer of the central research question such as: What are the main turning points that are affecting the development of civil society in the history of Turkish politics? What are the driving external and internal factors over the emergence of Islamist civil society organizations? How do AK PARTY policies affect Islamist civil society organizations and their relations with the state?

To make an accurate analysis of the relation between Islamist civil society and the state in the case of Mazlumder in the AK PARTY period in terms of the effect of democratization, choosing Islamic oriented civil society organization with a history dating back to the 1990s provides an opportunity to make comparative analysis in a given period. Selecting an organization that is working on related fields with democracy as a case makes it easier to investigate the stated issues. Although several Islamic oriented civil society organizations have existed after the 1980s, most of them have focused on education-related activities and choosing one of them as a case study would not give enough clues for making inferences about the democratization of civil society. Mazlumder has worked on the issues of human rights, including justice, religion, freedom of speech, asylum, minorities, and right to life since 1991, and it reports on these issues can be considered as accurate indicators of assessing the democratic level of the country. On the other hand, just and independence of an organization is an essential requirement; otherwise, outcomes of the analysis reflect a group which organization depends on and cannot be generalized. According to the statements of interviewees, Mazlumder has no organic bond with any group or movement, and also, they have not adopted any specific ideology or religious view. Taking reference to these, I have considered Mazlumder as an appropriate organization in terms of being unique and independent.

Unless an organization is far away from being neutral, it means that it becomes open to accept a directive plan from a higher authority which the organization is affiliated with. Parallel to this, members of the board of directorates of Mazlumder from the Istanbul branch had supportive statements.

In this research, I used several qualitative research methods. Historical analysis method is used for the literature review chapter. For the very last chapter which consists of interviews of members of Istanbul Mazlumder, face to face in-depth interview with proposing several questions is applied through meeting with four members of the board.

Before interviewing with the four people from Mazlumder Istanbul, I have contacted these people and ask for permission. After they have accepted to meet with me, we met in the Istanbul office of Mazlumder. Before I started to pose questions, I have informed to interviewee about the context and purpose of the work. And I took permission to make a voice record of

the interview. In line with the ethical principles, the names of the interviewees were not shared in this study.

As a result of historical analysis, and interviews with members of Mazlumder, this study argues that although Islamic motivated civil society has grown and widened their activities under the AK PARTY government, there has been differentiations within Islamist organizations based on the relation with the state as a result of democratization efforts. While neutral or opponent Islamist organizations have not benefited from positive outcomes of democratization process, other organizations that have taken sides with the political power have taken advantage of the process. Primary criteria of having benefit is based on where the organization take side against the political power, which determines the organization's opportunity space. To sum up, although civil society with specific to Islamist organizations has made positive progress, the traditional state-led character of civil society has not changed.

### **Outline of the Study**

This thesis is composed of five chapters; in the second chapter, the theoretical approach to the concept of civil society, discussions about Islam and civil society, democracy, and civil society relations are conveyed. Later, the historical development of civil society in Turkey is examined in detail by making time categorizations. Finally, internal and external factors are considered as turning points in historical analysis of civil society.

The third chapter development of Islamist civil society is handled in under three-time periods. Specifications of each period was stated in line with the civil society. The fourth chapter is composed of introductory information about Mazlumder, its field of activities, and, most importantly, interviews of four members of the board in the Istanbul branch of Mazlumder. As a result of meeting with interviewees, answers were categorized into four topics: challenges faced by civil society organizations, civil society- state relation with specific to Mazlumder, democracy- civil society relations, and the effect of the EU negotiation process over civil societies.

Finally, the conclusion consists of objective and subjective inferences regarding to the research focus, a summary of previous discussions and interviewees' statements.



## CHAPTER 2

### THEORETICAL APPROACH TO CIVIL SOCIETY

This chapter aims to analyze the concept of civil society and its reflections by looking at various approaches through theoretical discussions. In the literature, debates over civil society and state relations are generally based on the liberal approach. According to this approach, civil society and liberal democracy are perceived as indispensable two concepts. Although the concept of civil society is intended mostly by a liberal approach, different approaches should be taken into consideration while discussing civil society and state relations; because there are examples for illiberal civil societies from the non-democratic countries in the world or they have not completed transitioning liberal democracy. Therefore, different reflections regarding civil society- state relations occur. Separate, nesting, and state-controlled types can be given as examples of those reflection types and I will discuss these types in the following section. So, it is not enough to focus on only the liberal approach for analyzing civil society. Discussions made around the critical approach should be given place in terms definition, prerequisites of civil society. In this way, descriptions, characteristics, impediments, and requirements will be examined by the most accepted view. Then critical and illiberal approaches will be stated in line with the same discussion points. Followed by opinions on the relationship liberal and illiberal civil society discussions, opinions on the relationship between civil society and Islam will be stated. The main research focus of the study is about Islamist civil society; therefore, there is a need to transmit related discussions in literature as a theoretical background.

According to the most dominant approach regarding civil society, a variety of thinkers has made various definitions over the notion. Commonly, civil society, for the most part, is connected with the individual rights and commitments (OXHORN, 2011). Before mentioning civil society definitions of Ancient thinkers, I will state the historical development of notion. There has been developed an idea by several thinkers such as Ferguson, Paine, and Tocqueville regarding civil society in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, which underlined separation civil society from the state (Ay, 2009). As it is similar to the dominant contemporary approach regarding civil society, Tocqueville has developed an understanding toward civil society as gathering citizens and settling on a choice outside of the state to seek after the specific decision (Foley & Edwards, 1998). Therefore, it becomes easy to prevent despotic tendencies of state in a society where freedom of association

exists and functions (İ. Doğan, 2002). Similar to Tocqueville, although Hegel has stressed the separation between state and civil society, he has not favor of idea of full independency of civil society due to higher status of the state in the eyes of him (Yel, 2008). As it is seen, the idea of separate civil society was developed by these thinkers and contributed to the contemporary definition of the notion.

### **Liberal Approach on Civil Society**

Before defining the notion for the liberal approach, it is necessary to mention the impact of social, economic and political developments over the notion such as rising capitalist economies, failure of welfare state policies and the emergence of new social movements in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century in Europe (Keane, 1993). In the same period, intense discussions around citizenship have also impacted the definition of civil society. For instance, active and participant citizenship necessity for voluntary associations are perceived as components of civic culture and also directly linked with democracy (Almond & Verba, 1963). And voluntarily, associations means for mediating between individual and state, cause individuals to become aware and sensitive to public issues within the political system (Hodgkinson & Foley, 2003).

Another significant political event is the collapse of the Soviet Union, which pave the way for rising liberalism in the economic and political realm (İ. Doğan, 2002). Minimizing state intervention from social affairs and increasing the value of individualism as social outcomes of neoliberal policies lead to open space for civil society as interpersonal voluntarily based relationships (Çelebi, 2004). This understanding directly brings a separation between political and civic space and the rising value of liberal approach over the notion.

In the light of democracy- civil society discussions within the border of liberal view, firstly, I will state ideas of thinkers about the specifications of the social environment. As the liberal thought refers to independent civil society and having inalienable rights just because of being individual, unless the responsible actors provide sufficient social context, civil society cannot exist and flourish. According to Kant, civil society is a kind of mutual federation between ruler and ruled, and peace can only exist with the existence of federation (Hodgkinson & Foley, 2003). As Hall argued, the essential prerequisites for the flourishing of civil society is the existence of “countervailing powers” to the central authority. In other words, limited state and

constitutional state are can be named as the first prerequisites, as Çaha stated in his book (Çaha, 2000). Therefore, other parties from the out of center can participate and contribute to the state and public affairs through negotiation and persuasion (Hall, 1995).

Secondly, an economic criterion is stated as the existence of a market economy where economic activities are not solely controlled under the state, having the role of non-state actors such as private entrepreneurs, business firms, etc. Due to the determinative role of finance over social and political affairs, finance designate participation of parties depending upon their share in the economy. Through having a voice in economic activities as non- state actor, civil society opens a way to participate in these actors in social affairs in which field they interested. Another direct factor that is argued as a prerequisite is the spread of literacy and mass print culture by Hall (Hall, 1995). Without literacy and mass print media, society cannot be aware of their social, political, and economic agendas, so they cannot discuss with various means and transmit their collective voices to the central authority. On the other hand, society's literacy and reading level are highly associated with the social consciousness because when they read about their public affairs, civic sensibility will rise, which leads to the willingness of participation in general issues. In addition to the importance of print media, the contemporary transformation of media should be taken into consideration. Therefore, not only print media but also new media types such as electronic versions of printed media, social media, online tv channels, and broadcastings serve the same purpose. Moreover, current developments on the social platforms pave the way to even ordinary citizens for making their initiatives via starting live broadcast in various social media channels, which help to be delivered citizens voices, perceptions toward officials and public. One of the positive sides of the spreading of social platforms is that it eases collaboration and solidarity. Thus, people can get easily gather around shared issues in social media, later this togetherness move off from virtual platform to real ones.

In opposition to the prerequisites for civil society, some elements are clash with the constitutional state and principle of the rule of law, therefore considered as impediments for the existence and development of civil society. Populism, clientelism, opportunism, and personalism damage the civic nature of the public and private sphere (Hall, 1995). If state's policies and implementations are in favor of specific group or groups that they are in mutual



benefit each other. Then, this leads to limit other groups and segments of the society that they are indifferent side with the prevalent ideology or view. Representation of themselves and their expectation via organized and voluntary structure gradually becomes hard due to the state's manner. As long as the country actively involves in social and economic life directly or indirectly through various apparatus and take sides with certain groups, civil society space narrows.

Apart from the state's intervention in the social arena, in the economic field such as state-led modernization and industrialization affects the autonomy of civil society negatively. Except for economic factors, some extreme ideologies were perceived by states as ethnic nationalism and religious fundamentalism rule out of functioning civil society (Hall, 1995).

With the background of prerequisites and impediments for existing civil society according to the liberal view, significant characteristics of civil society can be discussed in detail. These characteristics are associated with the barriers and prerequisites mentioned above. Pluralism should become to mind as the first characteristic of civil society. Pluralism, first and foremost characteristic of civil society, can be considered as a distinction of interrelated spheres related to the public and private such as religion, justice, economy, politics. Although these are interconnected and associated terms and fields in many platforms, their function areas should be separate and distinctive. In a society or country where these spheres work in line with the directions or under the guidance of central power, even their distinct role and informal function does not make sense for realizing civil society.

On the contrary, pluralism can be read as a diversification of identities within the public sphere. Society consists of various groups of people from different ideological, religious, political, identical backgrounds. Allowing them to live with their differences and make them eligible to reflect their unique characteristics to the social arena cause implications of pluralism. When plural actors, institutions, and organizations with their different goals and interests take a position of balancing inner dynamics and state, the creation of civil society becomes possible. In the pluralistic social environment, clash of interests or disagreement between the groups may inevitably exist and the notion of consensus should emerge. To conclude with agreement, there is a need for discussion, seeking others interests and concerns. Therefore, it is possible to exist common good of common interest by the parties through consensus.

Here the notion of the common good or common interest can be ascribed with different meanings by different parties. For instance, “good” may not be imported as concrete status, whereas some may address something moral but others not. In order to deal with negation easier, good or common interest should point something touchable to the majority of groups; for instance, it should be in the position of serving most of the society. Therefore, in the process of discussion and consensus, other parties’ views and approaches should be taken into consideration. Tolerance is the crucial notion of treating other ideas with respect, without going too far and start otherization. How civil society requires visibility and free space to become exist in the non- state-dominated arena; likewise, civil society organs should treat each other fairly. Civil society has been a blurred concept in political science, which has different definitions by liberal, critical views; therefore, its place, role, expectations, and meanings vary (Doyle, 2016).

### **Critical Approach on Civil Society**

Several thinkers have developed a critical approach toward civil society. Thinkers from Marxist tradition think that civil society is not separate from the state; moreover, it is considered as a tool of the state to preserve economic, cultural hegemony of powerful. However, some thinkers have taken the issue from a different perspective and argued that illiberal civil society is possible. They state that, contrary to the most prevalent view regarding civil society in literature, civil society can exist in a non-democratic and illiberal political environment.

Marx and Gramsci, as representatives of the Marxist tradition, have defined the notion of civil society with hegemonic concepts. They have described civil society as a composition of hegemonic relations between civilian actors while Marx stressed on economic hegemony, Gramsci focused on cultural hegemony. Marx has opposed the idea of separation between state and civil society argued by the Hegel. According to Marx, the state contributes the continuity of order designed by the civil society, especially with the efforts of the owners. Capitalists always seek their interests within the border of civil society and represent it as national interest; therefore, the state becomes a tool for preserving the owner’s interest (Savran, 2003).

Gramsci, another leading critical thinker, has thought that there is no clear distinction between political sphere and civil society in terms activity space and autonomy, rather civil society

shaped by political power with the reference of his statement. And he has defined civil society as “the arena wherein the ruling class extends and reinforces its power by nonviolent means” (Buttigieg, 1995). Moreover, he argued that political and bureaucratic bodies could easily intervene and use the civil society in the direction of their interest and policies. Here civil society becomes very far from being autonomous, somewhat dependent, and sometimes the tool in the hand of powerful elites mostly state. Civil society can become vocal reflection and representative of the elites through acting on the direction of defined state ideology; therefore, people can get easily informed and softly used to the central ideology through civic institutions rather than rigid implications of state. When Gramsci’s views are taken as reference, it can easily be observed that grift and state-controlled civil society structures by focusing on state-civil society relations.

Regarding the idea of illiberal civil society, interfered and controlled type of civil society examples were experienced in the past and present by many states called as undemocratic, totalitarian, autocratic regimes. While some systems permit civil society to exist with its dependent and controlled structure, others not. Controlling mechanisms can occur in various ways depending upon state applications such as some societies associational life can be designed according to racial, ethnic, and class lines decided and monitored by the state (Bob, 2011). For instance, while specific groups stand close with state due to their shared values, identities, other groups of people from minority ethnic classes of the county become outsiders, and they cannot be eligible to get involved associational life as others. Dominant class or ethnicity do not let rip to others on social affairs; therefore, they don’t allow for others in their businesses, make them visible, and give their voice to the majority.

On the contrary to previously mentioned illiberal civil society types caused by the state manner, here, civil society-led anti-liberal cases called “civil society coup” in the literature will be explained. It is defined as an attempt to remove legitimate governor via undemocratic ways (Encarnación, 2002). Although liberal view argues that civil society is a crucial element for democracy promotion, it may not always take this positive stance. Even it may involve in political disorder, social unrest, and other types of undemocratic formations. In the case of Venezuela, civil society has taken an active role in forcing Chavez to resign, which is considered a civil society coup against the political authority (Encarnación, 2002). Similar to the

Venezuelan case, Turkish experience in the 28 February Process, civil society pro-military, and elite has favored the resigning of Prime Minister Erdogan from power rather than supporting the maintenance of civilian government. On the condition that weaknesses of state institutions and political instability cause civil society to support a military coup against the civil government, which is seen in the Bangladesh and Philippines also (Lorch, 2017).

### **Discussions on Islam and Civil Society**

Apart from defining civil society in terms of liberal and critical views, discussions around the issues of Islam, liberalism, civil society, and democracy will be stated in this part. Making this discussion is very meaningful for the context of the research because without transmitting a theoretical background, a research on Islamic civil society in Turkey could not be complete. There are two prominent views over the relationship between Islam, liberalism, and democracy. At the same time, some of them have considered a contractionary relationship; others have seen compatible as it is understood that Islam is taken into hand, not as religion rather political theory, which enables us to make comparison with ideology (Kamali, 2001). Some believe that Islam and liberalism are compatible with each other with reference principles of Islam. In the sense of economic principles, due to Islam permits market economy, private entrepreneurship, and ownership, which are at the same time forerunner criteria for liberalism, there is theoretical similarity between them (Barry, 1998). On the other hand, Kamali has considered the principle of autonomy, which depends on social authority and legitimacy as the main requirement for the existence of civil society in Islamic societies. For instance, he has perceived the Ulama class as a leading civil society group within the traditional Islamic theory because of their relative autonomy, which derived from the right to make *ijtihad* (Kamali, 2001). The Ulama class gains legitimacy from civil society, not from the political authority. Therefore, they can actively involve in the political decision process which is following of the result of the consensus made with other scholars (Roy, 2011). In this regard, the position of the Ulama class approves the Walzer's definition of civil society as "space of uncoerced human association and also the set of relations networks formed for the sake of family, faith, interest and ideology that fill the space" (Walzer, n.d.).

However, some have rejected the idea that civil society can only exist in the West. With parallel to the statement, Moussali has argued that due to Islam contains pluralism in itself by

permitting people with their non-Islamic religion and cultural lifestyles; therefore, civil society exist in Muslim communities. Although the notion of Umma is considered as composed of homogeneous Muslim people by some thinker, contemporary Muslim majority societies do not reflect this situation because they have influenced by outcomes of the modern state (Moussali, 1995).

In contrast to the stated arguments above, some have approached with a Western-centric view and argued that civil society could not exist in non-Western democratic systems and societies (Cohen & Arato, 1992). For instance, Ernest Gellner is one of the leading figures who support this idea. He has believed the impossibility of the existence of civil society in Muslim societies due to the dogmatic nature of religion, which does not open space to pluralism. He has also considered Islam as secularism-resistant because religion has offers toward many areas of life as a guidance that clashes with the principle of secularism. The notion of individualism, called Modularity by Gellner, is perceived as another obstacle for Muslim societies to have a civil society because he refers to Muslim communities more communitarian rather than individualistic (Gellner, 1994).

Another argument stated by scholars such as Adam Seligman and John Hall, refers that unique historical experiences of the emergence of civil society created Eurocentric habitat for the notion. The concept of civil society is accepted as a unique feature for European political culture because, the historical development of notion is linked to some other European based concepts such as citizenship, the market economy, individualism, and liberalism. Therefore, the application of civil society to non-European geographies does not fit well because of differences of historical experiences and political culture as an outcome of the process (Anjum, 2012). To sum up discussions around Islam and civil society, on the one hand it can be said that Orientalist and Western-centric statements by scholars have stressed on historical and cultural uniqueness therefore they rejected the idea of compatibility of civil society and Islam. On the other hand, although having different past experiences with Europe, Muslim Communities can have civil society as long as the adopting prerequisites of notion. Moreover, as many thinkers accepted that there is no single model of civil society and non-European cultures can create their model. Within various perspectives, in this thesis I have adopted the idea that civil society and Islam is compatible to each other. As Kamali, Moussali, Roy and Barry have developed and argument

within this direction, I have also agreed their statements. The difference in historical experiences of West and Islamic world does not mean inexistence of civil society in Islamic countries. Especially ulama class, i.e. condition of religious authority, and waqf tradition can be consider as indicators of my argument.



## CHAPTER 3

### HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF CIVIL SOCIETY IN TURKEY

Civil society became an important issue, especially in the post-1980 period in Turkey with the introduction of liberal economic policies and the existence of non-state initiator actors in economic and social life. Political outcomes of 1980 military coup is another crucial element over discovery and development of civil society by enlightened people to find alternative against suppressive, decisive manners of the state. In this process, new issues such as civil society, liberalism, state minimalism, democracy, environment came to the ground for discussion. Newly emerged actors, Islamic- oriented figures have started to give support for the emergence of Islamist based civil society. Although the most religious civil society has a natural link with religious or political movements, there have been a few organizations with their separate working fields. Mazlumder (The Association for Human Rights and Solidarity for the Oppressed), the case of this research, is one of the independent, religiously motivated organizations which works on a specific issue on human rights for nearly 30 years in Turkey. Up to the current time, although civil society is affected by various socio-political changes, Mazlumder has preserved its place within related discussions and activities.

This chapter gives answers to following questions associated with the central question of the study: What are the leading turning points that affect the development of civil society in the history of Turkish politics? What is the driving external and internal factors that foster civil society? To answer these questions, the historical development of civil society and its relations with the state are examined from beginning of the late Ottoman period until the contemporary time. By doing so, the literature over Turkish political history, state-civil society relations, internal and external factors on democratization are stated in this chapter.

#### **Civil Society in the Ottoman Period**

Attempting to analyze civil society in the Republican period certainly requires going back to the Ottoman period and ask for whether civil society existed or not and if it existed in which manner this existence occurs. The legacy of Ottoman political culture has influenced the contemporary political structure, which as one of the dominant factors shaping civil society's character, role,

and place. In the literature, there are various approaches regarding the existence of civil society following the ascribed meaning to the notion. Indeed, comparing it with European experience and expecting similar characteristics from the civil society of the Ottoman is not fair because their political contexts are different (Anjum, 2012). Besides the following differences between Ottoman and European social structures create a different social path in understanding civil society and social dynamics: the lack of ideological enlightenment process which can be thought of as an infrastructure for the emergence of civil society, locating political power within the state structure, cultural division between central and periphery (Tosun Erdoğan, 2001).

Before discussing whether civil society existed or not, social and state structure must be stated due to have valid examinations and comments regarding the issue. Firstly, the Ottoman society consists of various types of groups of people from different ethnicities and religious identities. The primary concern of the central authority was protecting the sultan's power and incomes of treasure from any damage. Except for this priority, unique characters and domestic affairs of various groups were allowed to be exempted from the state intervention as long as they guaranty their reliance on the survival of the state and state treasury (İnalçık, 1997). However due to the strong state structure, the state did not assume to direct society toward a determined ideological way; therefore, we cannot see the social engineering role of the state. Because there was no prevailing state ideology to protect and survive but, in this sense, the traditional state system replace with the ideology (İnalçık, 1997).

In the system where a persuasive central authority guaranteed the sultan's power and the rest of the society were expected to serve this aim, it was not possible to attempt an oppositional or alternative ideological, systemic criticism against the central authority. Therefore, some had argued that civil society did not exist in the sense of the European type by claiming a lack of possible control mechanisms against the central authority. Due to political, economic, and social power, united into one and upper central power, which made it impossible for the division of these fields within non-state bodies. The only decision-making body is based on a high bureaucratic position; people in lower positions or non-bureaucratic positions could not get a chance to express their opinion (Grigoriadis, 2005). In contrast to this idea, Mardin has stated that "the existence of private law guaranteed with the Sharia Law which is not interested area by the Sultan could be considered as a proof of possibility to the



existence of civil society” (Mardin, 2007).

According to Çaha (Çaha, 2004) civil society has divided into three time periods in Ottoman time, and each of the periods has its characteristics in terms of relations with the state authority, autonomy of the elements of the civil society. The first period is lasted at the end of 16<sup>th</sup> Century which most visible civil society elements have appeared as tarikats and medreses which were supposed to accommodate forming social structure of newly conquered areas. At that time, these civic bodies were considered autonomous from the state. On the contrary, civic bodies such as loncas, tarikats which are elements of the millet system, religious orders, and training centers came under the control and domination of the central authority at the 16<sup>th</sup> -19<sup>th</sup> centuries. This situation caused losing the autonomous structure of bodies. Lastly, the third period lasted from the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the 1920s. While civil society bodies gained a power parallel with Ottoman modernization, the persuasive central authority was willing to take control of these bodies. Therefore this situation caused to occur paradoxical environment (Çaha, 2004).

Several bodies and organizations within the social structure were considered as civil society organs by the believers of existence of civil society in Ottoman based on by looking at their autonomy in their domestic affairs and place in social life. These are craftsman organization or chambers, waqfs and religious orders, etc. Craftsman organizations were created by the members of crafts with aiming to decide on issues about themselves without going court to deal with disagreements between them. However, they were supposed to obey some rules put by the central authority in terms of prices of processed goods that should be in the range between stated values. Therefore, as it is mentioned above, the state was sensitive to economic issues, which limits the organizations.

On the other hand, one of the most well-known institutions which correspond contemporary civil society organization are the waqfs. Although their activity arena was various and spread diverse fields of life, the duty of the waqfs is delivering public goods through funded individuals to provide public needs in many areas. In that time, waqfs were replaced with the modern welfare state model through filling all the gaps that the welfare state is responsible for fulfilling, such as education, construction, religion, military services, healthcare services,

public works, and reconstruction. Waqfs had legal personality and could only be controlled and judged by the kadi of the religious court, not by the traditional court. This shows that these institutions were relatively autonomous rather than other social institutions and bodies. Besides stating material duties and benefits of the waqfs', they had social functions such as preventing social clash, regulating the distribution of income, regulating social relationships, employment-intensive effect, prevention of alienation effect, and effect to social unity etc. (Ertem, 2011).

Tarikats, as well as the waqfs and lonca's, can be considered one of the types of civil society in the Ottoman State. Although various sects, cults, and movement had existed, due to the state policy, Sunni type of Islam was supported by the state. Due to the state considered tarikats as one of the social state mechanisms regarding shaping social structure, pure autonomy could not happen. For the teaching of Sunni type of Islam, the state was introduced as a sacred institution, and for protecting, supporting unity and survival of the state was perceived responsibility of believers. Sometimes, some sultans have had close relationships with specific Sunni tarikats, which is also evidence for the stated argument. However, Sufi tarikats had taken one of the most active and efficient opposite roles against the state (İnalçık, 1997). We had come across with the advisory writing pieces written up the leading person of the Sufi tarikats. It had shown that religious orders could potentially maintain a stance against the state when their views had clashed with the rulers of the state. Due to having a large size of public audience capacity, tarikats were located in a critical position in the eyes of the statesman because the general discourses and views of tarikats have the potential of creating a public opinion against the state.

There are some critical turning point events besides replacing former institutions with contemporary civil society organizations or on the way of modernizing the country. This process has started with the Sened-i İttifak in 1810 and continued with the Second Constitution (Çaha, 1995). Proclamation edict of Tanzimat, Islahat, First and Second Constitution, and other social reforms and developments were considered leading catalyzer powers in this process. As well these legal changes are symbols, at the same time forerunners of being stones of forming constitutional state. Recognition of the Ayan's as a rising civil power in the face of the state were recorded as notable development by the agreement of Sened-i

Ittihak under the administration of Sultan Mahmud the Second. Proclamation of Islahat, as well as Tanzimat, empowered the idea of making the state powerful again but different from previous by strengthen bureaucrats around the center rather than the sultan's authority. Under the project of modernizing state, transfer students or civil servants adopted the aim of westernization by adapting legal, social, and political structures to the Ottoman state system. Therefore, these transferred people started to overlook people in the periphery because they have legitimized their modernization role over both state and society structures. Elite's manner based on thinking themselves superior over the others caused ideological alienation to the public and ended up with following top-down modernization(Ay, 2009).

Period after the 1860s, the search for constitutional order under the leading young Ottomans lead to influence decisions of stateman, which caused taking tangible steps toward the demanded direction. Post-second constitutional era made non-state actors and groups enable them to organize and form civil legal bodies under the guarantee of the constitution. Associations, political parties, workers union, various political opinions emerged in the society (Tosun Erdoğan, 2001). The public sphere is occurred with the help of the emergence of groups adopted different ideologies such as nationalism, Islamism, and Westernism and those ideologies lead to flourishing creation productive social environment (Çaha, 1999). According to Kalaycıoğlu, the emergence of civil society was not linear because of abolishing Second Constitution and naming newly occurred organizations, political and social movements are considered as illegal by the central power.

Moreover, while foreign people become more active and wealthier in social life due to their jobs such as trade and business, local people were not in the same position because they were mainly having farm jobs, which is weak for shaping social life compared to trade activities. Thus, emergence and flourish of voluntarism based civil society cannot be expected from local people (Kalaycıoğlu, 1997).

### **Civil Society in Republican Era**

It is not accurate to say that the newly founded Turkish Republic has its own socio-politic culture purely different from the Ottoman state. The new state has carried the same population with the same customs and culture rather than an immediate and total change.

There is a need to note that democracy as the demanded regime was not a product of the Republic. However, it is the product of a process which has started with the young Turks movement midst of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in the Ottoman (Çaha, 1999). Civil society – state relations have divided into three periods in terms of the character of relations, respectively: the period under the single-party ruling, the period between the transition to multi-party system until 1980 and lastly period from 1980 until present (Tosun Erdoğan, 2001). Overall the general condition of civil society is very associated with the political and social life in its contemporary time. For this reason, political experiences are the primary driving element over the shaping of civil society due to the lack of autonomous civil society in Turkey from part to present.

Generally, characteristics of the period until 1980, where liberalism had started to settle into both society and state, can be summed up with the narrowing public space (Çaha, 1999). Although a new state seems to differentiate itself with its goals and applications from the Ottoman past, “patrimonial state tradition” has been maintaining by new actors such as state bureaucrats. Especially on the road of modernization, the sacred role that enlightened people undertook as a duty realizing their aim for the sake of development of state (Ay, 2009). Leading elites of the former Republic have embarked on a formative and transformative role over the society to create new people with the latest norms and customs. To realize this sacred aim, every kind of ongoing and foregoer entities as well as political parties, associations, foundations, and ordinary social movement faced with the obstacle by the state representatives.

The formal manner of the Republic was denying former norms and customs without taking consideration of the various societal structure of Anatolia. Similarly, later generations adopted the same ideology which is having the consideration of local, religious, ethnic groups as unnecessary remainders from the dark past of the Turkey (Mardin, 2000). The relation between center and periphery became more separate and disharmonized and resulted in alienated periphery at the end of implementations and politics (Çaha, 1995). For implementing reforms, state institutions shift popular Islamic identity to Western-influenced nation-state identity. The first aim is to reach modern European standards; this is becoming almost a new official belief of state. Modernization is a destiny that is composed of economy, social life, politics, and culture. In another words, modernization is considered as a transition from religious-based life to secular one where human reasoning is superior (Heper & Yıldırım,

2011). Atatürk argued that “our national morality should be cleansed and supported with modern principles and free thought.” Positive sciences and rationality replaced with customs and religious teaching. But Atatürk’s ideology is based on duality of aims: nationalism against the West and modernization against the Islamic social establishment (Kösebalaban, 2011).

Ruler class has a legal reference point for their arbitrary policy implementation, which the constitution and law regulations paved the way for it. For instance, rights and freedom of people were not under the guarantee of the 1924 constitution. Later on, the decision on closure of association was given to legislative authority as a result of 1938 law change. By considering this law, unwanted social and political formations could be easily prevented in the name of maintaining the state’s stability and safety of the regime.

While civil society has narrowed due to these legal and political situations, there were some non-state at the same time state-led organizations and institutions in the education sector called as Halk Evleri (People’s Houses). Nearly 300 Halk Evleri were serving for the rising level of education of local people in mostly the rural area by teaching values, virtues of the Republic, and citizenry responsibilities besides craft promotion. Not only Halk Evleri, but also Türk Ocakları (Turkish Hearths), Türk Kadınlar Birliği (Union Turkish Women), and Mason Associations were actively taking part in the associational life (Çaha, 1995). After a while, these associations were closed down in the years of 1930s, although they have been actively operating for a considerable time (S. Aslan, 2010). Taking these as reference, inference regarding state-civil society relations in this period can be summed up that civil society was highly under the direction of state and used as a state apparatus. The state has maintained a powerful and transformative role over the many aspects of life and has no face with any challenges during that period.

The origin of the notion of secularism, which refers to the separation of church and state that is based on French, did not implement how it is supposed to be in Turkey. Instead, the state had taken a regulative role over religion that created a unique Turkish type of secularism. Besides it was considered as a prerequisite for westernization rather than of democracy (Göle, 1997). As it is one of the core principles of Atatürk and Republic played a preventative role over the limiting diversification of civic and political life has shown as a pretext by the state elites. To not to face any religiously motivated social or political occurrences, the state itself

has formed the Directorate of Religious Affairs under the office of the prime minister to take religion under control. Therefore, a reliable and accurate version of Islam was taken under the guarantee of the state. “Goal of Directorate of Religious Affairs (DIB) is that administer the Islamic affairs and faith, rituals, moral principles, and to enlighten to society about religion and govern the places of worship” (H. Yavuz, 2003). Taking religious affairs under state responsibility naturally prevented any emergence by referencing theological argumentation, which created a gap in the realm of civil society (Çaha, 1995). Religious institutions and appearances from past were abolished or banned in the light of the principle of secularism because religion was accused of being a reactionary element. As can be seen from the social-political environment mentioned above, civil society except a few state-led ones could not emerge and flourish in the single-party era.

#### **Civil society in the period between the transition multi-party system and 1980**

The process started in 1945 when the Republican People’s Party (RPP) allowed the establishment of the Democratic Party by some members of the RPP, Adnan Menderes, Celal Bayar, Fuat Köprülü, and Refik Koraltan, as an opposition party. Although RPP remained electoral success in 1945 general elections, Democrats had got chance to enter parliament with 65 represent of parliament. Later on, RPP had to face the necessity of legal changes; therefore, steps have taken on the way of liberalization of politics, especially years between 1946-47 (Ahmad, 1995). They have got the majority of votes in the 1950 elections and came to power with strong public support by quickly mobilizing such peripheral elements like peasants. This election result called as “victory of the periphery over the center” (Özbudun, 2006). Shifting a multi-party system had brought such as liberalization and provided more freedom to the public sphere. Especially in the socio-political life, associations, foundations, political parties, religious orders have started to come to light, which leads to collapsing a particular type of identity and life structure which was monitored by the state.

Along with the transition to multi-party politics, the insecurity of religious orders and communities was translated into struggles for power to assure a secure place in society. The clientelist nature of the relationship between the right-wing political parties and religious groups in the 1950s and 1960s could not change the securitizing aspects of Kemalism towards

Islamic demands. Although suppressed social and political organs began to emerge, they were far away from having autonomy in themselves, which requires process with embedded civilian culture.

In line with the Democrat Party's economic and foreign policy agenda, Turkey's fast integration was aimed to capitalist bloc. As well as a liberal political view, economic policies were supposed to be implemented. With the promotion of mechanization of agriculture through foreign aid packages, the volume of the production was reached an excessive level that a high level of agricultural production was exported. As a result of this policy, middle-class rural people increased their support to Democrats as long as they become wealthy. But this golden and external support based economic era did not last long. High inflation, depreciation of the Turkish currency, coincidental economic policies caused high level political and economic destabilization, which resulted in limiting freedom of speech, organization, press and thought.

Moreover, people to criticize the government was accused of being traitor by the ruler. The difference between views of a single party and democrats nearly disappeared as it is seen that the government has lost its legitimacy from nation which is derived from stressing on already lost liberal values (Tosun Erdoğan, 2001). There are some similarities between the single-party regime's RPP and the Democrat Party in terms of characteristics of party administration type. Both leaders legitimized their personal decisions without accepting any control mechanism, and they have a lack of tolerance directed by inter-party critiques (Turan, 2000). All this process ended up with military intervention over the civilian government, and military power refreshed its invisible but ultimate tutelage by this movement, which harmed the experience of democratization attempts. Military intervention as a break for democracy has shown that there has not been a smooth and easy transition process from a single party regime to a multi-party system because the same institutions and organizations of the previous government maintained their supremacy over the civilian politics (Kara-İncioğlu, 2000).

The process has continued with the new constitution, which was prepared by the group consist of professors who were experts on the law. Although the new constitution results from an undemocratic act, it has provided widening social rights and guaranteeing personal freedom. For instance, autonomy was given to universities, in line with what I stated previously it has prepared based on limiting executive power's authority. On the other hand, the formation of

the National Security Council leads to the opportunity to get involved directly into political decisions (Ay, 2009).

When it is looked at the general status of civil society in this period, the transition multi-party system did not bring positive change over current organizational life in terms of civil organizations. Whereas liberalization attempts in economic life have taken, social and cultural reflections of these could not exist. Therefore, it is not possible to talk about the existence of an autonomous civil society (Keyman, 2006). On the other hand, unlike the formal organizational structure of civil society, the 1960s were the symbol of beginning of politized political life into right and left ideology. Especially in universities, leftist groups were very active around their associations and print media (Ahmad, 1995). One another reason behind increasing social movements was that a significant amount of people has stated migrate from rural areas to city centers as parallel to rising industrialization attempts. Therefore, the number of both worker and owner class are increased. Especially through the self-consciousness of members of the working class and adopting left ideology, social protest, strike, and march become visible to represent their identity and views (Kalaycioğlu, 1997). Not only leftist groups, but also people from the right, nationalist wing was also very active in opposing to leftists. Although both groups seem like a representation of non-state ideology indeed their attitude toward each other showing authoritarian character. They have tended to suppress all political arena with their ideology without giving space for breathing like how state act to non-state actors. Therefore, it was not possible to talk about the prerequisites of civil society, such as tolerance, interaction, and self-limitation in that period (Öztekin, 2009). Contrary to expectation, the confrontation between left-right wing groups became excessive levels that resulted in the death of hundreds of people in streets and universities.

Except for left and right-wing groups, there were also motivated Islamic groups who were not numerically much and not involved ongoing violence as others. They have regret as an alternative against dominant ideologies. Islamic groups have begun to occur after the 1950s and grew during the post-1980 period. Their initial concern was to express an ambiguous link between Islam motivated Turkish identity and later adopted secular characteristic Western Modernity. Members of these groups have migrated from rural areas to centers and improved their intellectual capabilities; therefore, they could come eligible to propose alternatives with



self-confidence. Islamists have faded in the social arena, especially with religiously motivated political party under the leadership Necmettin Erbakan who was firstly articulated religiously motivated local people whose native identity and expectations ignored by the state.

Again, another military intervention to array political, economic, and social order happened in 1971, and every kind of political activities was banned, civil organizations were closed, press freedom damaged (Tosun Erdoğan, 2001). Although these harsh implementations, social developments have not processed as military wished and on the conversely, the volume of these activities increasingly continued (Ay, 2009). When it came to the end of the 1970s, the death toll reached over 1500, and a new type of violence has begun to emerge by killing symbols and leading persons such as Nihat Erim, Kemal Türkler who was the head of leftist worker organization *Disk*.

In addition to an excess of political violence and financial difficulty with a lack of response from state representatives, it caused another serious military takeover into politics in 1980 under the leadership of Chief General Kenan Evren. As it is announced that the military took over government due to the inefficiency of state organizations, which resulted in the dissolution of parliament and cabinet, waived parliamentary immunity, ending activities of political parties and unions, arresting of all political party leaders (Zürcher, 2000). Nearly 8000 people consisting of students, especially leftists, Islamists were sent to prison and exposed to torture; thus, many of them dead indecisively as a result of inhumane manners in prison (Ahmad, 1995). Military officials have undertaken ruling responsibility with the aim of radical changes in the constitution to design the administrative structure of the state. With another name, the rule of the game will be written by real decision-makers to shape internal and external borders of state structure to prevent unwanted facing situations.

### **Civil Society in the Post-1980 Period**

As it is stated in the military coup announcement that the country will be governed by the National Security Council under the leadership of Kenan Evren until the next general elections, which will be held three years later. Under the condition that executive authority of the control of NSC, a new government was formed with the appointment of prime minister retired admiral Bülent Ulusu. Although governing cadre was mostly consisting of military personals, Turgut Özal

as a civilian politician, was appointed as responsible for the finance, which shows that his views and policies on the economy will be remained and supported by the military government (Ahmad, 1995). Kenan Evren, as a President, has gained ultra-powers over legislative, executive, and judiciary bodies with the passing new constitution result of the referendum in November 1982.

The new constitution can be considered as a cornerstone event from many aspects such as politics, society, democracy, civil society, and so on. In the area of politics, old politicians were disqualified from making politics actively contrary to newly accepted law for political parties, which pave the way for opening new political parties. Motherland Party was formed by Turgut Özal as a result of modern law and gained success with the 45% vote in 1983 general elections. Özal had mainly emphasized on the economic policies regarding the entering liberalization and globalization process (Öztekin, 2009). Mostly, features of the neo-liberal economy, such as minimalizing state, individualism, and free-market, also open the way for demands regarding personal rights and freedoms, transformation in state-and citizen relations (Keyman, 2006). Although Özal did not firstly adopt the liberal policy, attempted several times for liberal-led minds, but post 1980 period, this became more loudly and demanding. As liberalism requires integration to the globalization process, the state became open for following trend discussions and redundancies in mostly Europe and America, such as rising importance of civil society besides the economic effects of globalization (Tosun Erdoğan, 2001). Unlike the pre-1980 period, there has not been created a strict separation between state and society by the Özal government; instead, he emphasized on entrepreneurship as a social value (Sarıbay, 2000). Because the economy and politics are associated with each other, in this period, economic policies were taken an active role over directing political tendencies and transformations.

Moreover, the state's dominancy was not limited to finance only. The social arena was also highly influenced by creating and monitoring a single identity manner of the state. Liberal discourses have also affected corroding discourses on the unity of the nation, which was used as a legitimate reason for creating a single type of identity and limits of social structure (Köker, 1998). Therefore, a variety of groups and segment of society has preferred to focus on their business and development instead of fighting with each other, which paved the way specialization and professionalization on civil society firstly in republican history.

Regarding changes in civil society as a part of the social transformation, many have thought that the post-1980 period is a turning point for diversifying social groups, identities that become visible and flourishing civil society as related to implied economic and social policies. Especially with the de-politicization efforts of state officials triumphed by the military coup of 1980, people became afraid to reflect their view on politics, religion, and ethnicity. But starting from the mid-1980s with the rise of civilian demands, people began to reveal their colors into social life. This was also meant that coming across with challenging claims on the state's unquestionable policies by the public. For example, to the issues; civil society, environment, Islam, democratic participation, social democracy, and human rights so on. Moreover, each specific group has created its audiences with a professional organization (Çaha, 2000). For instance, the formation of human rights organizations by a group of people from both Islamic and secular front has shown that old rivalry groups became organized for the same purpose without clashing.

Besides the trend topics mentioned above, previously ignored or suppressed groups such as Alevis, Kurds, religiously motivated people have become visible. Especially Islamists were the most active groups within the whole civil society (Çaha, 2004). The reason behind supporting and taking an active part in the realm of civil society is that according to state and military elites, these identities were supposed to be ignored and convert through acceptable state-led character; otherwise, it was legitimate to use counterpower against them. Furthermore, nationalism and secularism were other reasons for excluding these identities in the name of protecting the nature of the state. The only way to escape a suppressive manner of state and transform was considered as supporting civil society by taking active roles; therefore, the state was to face their reality and give up limiting diverse components of society. In this regard, groups were categorized into two camps based on whether pro-civil society or state (Sarıbay, 2000). Although current pro-civil society groups were fighting each other in the pre-80 period, they became a member of the same camp after the mid-1980s. This situation makes it easy to settle values such as tolerance, solidarity as a prerequisite for embedded civil society culture.

Islamists, as a focus group of this study, need more attention than others; therefore, it can be more eligible to make comparisons between periods. Islamists have started to take the role of various areas of social life, such as industry, education, and politics, etc. Although the state had

different concerns while opening Quranic Schools, religious curriculum, new mosques, and widening religious resources under the state's support, these have served people to become aware of more about religion and breaking down state's rigid approach toward religion and religious people (Zürcher, 2000).

Without intellectual development, any ideological movement can exist and survive. Taking that principle as a reference, people have begun to take into consideration the universality and complexity of Islam. They have broader discourses which exceeds geography, specified nation, ethic and cultural characteristic. Some developments had contributed to emerge this social situation is that after the 1970s with the translation of Islamist writers such as Hasan al-Benna, Sayyid Qutb and Mawdudi's books into Turkish entailed to appear Islamic revivalist movements especially within the young. Thus so, terms such as "World of Islam" is started to be used which lead to Islamic groups or communities to turn their eyes toward neighboring Muslim communities. During these years, the term "Islamism" was used explicitly political arena more than other spaces. Ismail Kara who is a specialist on Islamism and related topics defined it as;

as a movement which is activist, modernist and includes political, intellectual, scientific activities, seeking, proposals and solutions that aim to implement Islam to live as a whole (faith, worship, morality, philosophy, politics, law, education, etc.) to rescue Islamic world from Western exploitation, tyrant and despotic rulers, captivity and superstitions, to civilize, unite and develop them" (Kara, 1990).

*Aydınlar Ocağı*, one of the civil society organizations, was a meeting point for people who believes in "Turkish-Islam synthesis" as an alternative to leftist ideology during the 1980s. Intellectual activities such as seminars, courses were organized in line with the organization's thinking. Its ideology became predominant in several political movements, mainly Nationalist Front, National Salvation, and later Justice Party (Zürcher, 2000). But Islamic discourses used as party guide and reference point, which became apparent in Milli Görüş (National Outlook) Movement starting from its first party Milli Nizam Partisi (National Order Party). Especially personal knowledge and experiences of movement, Necmettin Erbakan has begun to become a determinant of religiously motivated political path in Turkey.

In the financial arena, with the rise of urbanization, free-market economy in the domestic sphere, new actors emerged from middle-income and have national-religious sensibilities that they will be called as green capital. They became a financial supporter of motivated Islamic

groups in the social and political arena. Although they were not wealthy and powerful as much as secular Business Organizations, they have become one of the elements of Financial actors of the country. Historical development of civil society can be sum like that rising of civil society in terms of both quantity and quality has accelerated in the post-1980 period and continued in the 1990s. However, in the case of Islamists as an exception, their institutionalized identities thanks to a political party, associations, waqfs, unions, and organizations was interrupted and closed down by the postmodern military coup hold on 28 February in 1997 against the Welfare Party Government under the leadership of Necmettin Erbakan. I do not go into detail on that because the issue will be handling in the next chapter.

### **Civil Society in Post-2000 Era**

Turkey had significant positive developments in the favor of promotion for flourishing civil society at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The first one was an internationally organized Habitat Forum, which aimed to support civil society and its activity in 1996. The second event was an unfortunate earthquake that happened in central around Izmit in 1999. Although the earthquake event was very devastating and resulted in many deaths, it proved limited state facilities and the need for solidarity of non-state actors (H. Aslan, 2011). Therefore, the importance of civil society organizations was recognized by the social actors, and the number of organizations has shown an increase.

Civil society in the post-2000 period coincided with the reign of the AK PARTY as a new political party and actor in Turkish politics. Although civil society has carried its traditional features as being a part of the whole political culture, it has faced many legal and social changes. With reference to previously said statement, which points that civil society has not had autonomous space exerted from politics. Civil society in this period has not fully independent from political and even economic sphere. Turkey has been witnessing coalition governments and unstable financial status until 2002, which caused world-weariness on the people but, positive expectations from future have been raising to get rid of the current unstable condition.

Economic instability resulted from both tensions among politicians and coalition governments peaked up with the 2001 economic crises. The government was not sufficient to handle this crisis by itself, which was actually requiring more complex programs. Civil society was

considered as one of the actors on the way of making Turkey more durable and powerful (Keyman, 2006). Because, if civil society as a prerequisite of a well-established democracy exist, the state transforms in a peaceful and stable status which directly related to economic stability. On the other hand, the identity and party program of a newly formed and rising political party called Justice and Development Party (AK PARTY) has promised promotion of democracy, freedom, stable economy, justice, development, and so on. These commitments were compatible with what people need therefore it has won the elections with a majority of votes. They have named themselves as “Conservative Democrat” instead of formerly religious identity to not face with past experiences. This transformation also reflects the change in the view of Islamic movements toward liberal democracy (Ülkü Doganay, 2002). They have developed an approach toward religion as an unavoidable part of human being but not a tool for policymaking (Turunc, 2007). New conservative identity has combined modernity, which does not deny the custom, and at the same time universality, which accepts local norms (Akdoğan, 2006).

To understand AK PARTY’s identity and value, there is a need to look at their official party constitution. It describes the Republic ‘as the most important acquisition of the Turkish nation’ and asserts that ‘the will of the nation is the only determinant power.’ The party ‘considers the will of the nation, the rule of law, reason, science, experience, democracy, the fundamental rights and freedoms, and morality as the main references of its conception of government.’ AK PARTY ‘acknowledges and respects all the birthrights of people, such as having different beliefs, ideas, races, languages, the right of expression, the right of association, and the right to live.’ It considers that diversity is not (a source of) differentiation, but our cultural richness that reinforces our solidarity. AK PARTY believes that national will can be sovereign only when political rights are freely exercised, and, in turn, free exercise of political rights can only be realized in a pluralist and participatory democratic society. AK PARTY emphasizes the freedom of expression for everybody and the right to live according to one’s beliefs. The state should not favor or oppose any idea or thought, and the guarantee of this understanding is the constitutional principles regarding secularism and equality before the law. Secularism is perceived as a principle which guarantees freedom and social harmony; therefore, AK PARTY promised the protection requirements of secularism (Ak Party Tüzüğü, 2002).

AK PARTY's constitution shows that the party program is prepared based on the European Union (EU) norm and values, which refers to the promotion of liberty, the superiority of democracy. In addition to that AK PARTY's Development and Democratization Program, which is also prepared according to European Union Copenhagen Criteria, emphasizes democracy, human rights, and the rule of law. Copenhagen Criteria was declared in 1993 as guidelines to get accepted by the EU commission, which requires to have a system based on the rule of law, respect for human rights, freedom of speech, democracy, efficient and compatible market economy and free-market economy (European Council, 1993). There is no doubt that after Turkey had witnessed political and social unstable conditions many years, these required criteria would be influential in respect to giving their electoral decision. Because persecuted parts of the society, ethnic minorities, and suppressed social groups were in need, such kind of environment which can provide sustaining freedom and justice that support of these people made AK PARTY successful in the 2002 election with the majority of votes.

AK PARTY's understanding of secularism is on the same dimension with their conservative democrat identity. They consider secularism as a primary principle of the Turkish state as it is stated at part constitution. Their understanding of secularism is not negative but rather a positive on the way of rearticulating the Ottoman Islamic ethos as the spirit of tolerance, accommodation, and coexistence of faiths, cultures, and ideals (H. Yavuz, 2003). They were very sensitive to this principle because of previous bitter experiences that they have. Therefore, they were against the religious-oriented policies and discourses. Defined meaning under the term conservative democracy and its difference from previously used ones is that conservative democracy is a new political philosophy and style that never existed before in politics. Conservatism can be seen in the policies and platforms of certain center-right parties, from the Democrat Party of Adnan Menderes to the Justice Party of Demirel, and most recently Motherland Party of Turgut Özal (Akdoğan, 2006). However, AK PARTY has identified itself with an exactly conservative identity, unlike the others. For example, AK PARTY emphasized social order and prioritized justice for establishing order. It is asserted that politics are seen as an instrument for serving the interests of society. Family and religion are also highlighted frequently. Family is described as the essential social institution, referring to its role in building a bridge between past and future and preserving traditional values. Religion is seen as a cohesive and unifying force. The emphasis on continuity is also remarkable in AK PARTY's

discourse (Çağlıyan-İçener, 2009). So, essentialist and dogmatic aspects of Turkish Islamism have been erased, and its pragmatic perspective has been strengthened by AK PARTY's new discourse on conservative democracy which attempts to achieve a compromise between Islam and democracy. Pragmatism and moderate-soft political language would help to be integrated into the international system. The global system seeks partners or actors to be shared common political language and work for it through cooperation; therefore, AK PARTY had aimed to adopt the requirements of the global system into its body and the state structure through reforms. EU conditionality is perceived as the most significant driving force by AK PARTY to support civil society and democratization. Keyman has argued that general elections of 2002 and acceleration of EU-Turkey relations were the signals starting of the democratization process in Turkey (Keyman, 2006). To have a general idea about the status of civil society from the beginning of the 2000s until now, considering the effect of European Union on the issue is significant and meaningful.

### **The Influence of the European Union as an External Factor over Civil Society**

In this section, firstly the historical chronology of Turkey-EU relations is mentioned, later EU-led legal changes regarding civil society is discussed. Due to mutual relations between the EU and Turkey with accelerating official progress in the post-2000 period, this section is placed right after historical reviews of the 2000s. Since 1969, with the application for associate membership to EEC, the EU has become a desired and prestigious regional organization to be part of it. Having accepted in Customs Unions in 1996 did not trigger political membership as well. Although this passion, Turkey's journey has not followed around a straight line instead of the path with ups and downs because of political, economic instability, and democratic deficiency of Turkey in the eyes of the European Commission. Especially related to lack of democracy, commission reports had focused on the issues around fundamental rights specific to minority, women, and civil-military relations, relations with neighbors, human rights, and freedoms.

While Luxemburg Summit would not end with an affirmative reply to Turkey's candidacy for full membership, in Helsinki Summit, which just holds a year later, resulted in the acceptance of nomination for full membership (Aydın-Düzgit, 2012). To start negotiating on full membership, on the condition that Turkey has to redeem on political criteria such as how other member



countries apply in their country. Starting from Helsinki Summit, Turkey has begun to benefit from the EU's support for the development of policies related to the EU. Therefore, this event can be accepted as a turning point in the history of Turkey-EU relations.

As Yılmaz has stated that Turkey's EU path can be divided into three time periods in terms of government's performance on reforms. First period is called as Europeanization Process years between 1999-2005 (Yılmaz, 2016). After Turkey becomes a candidate for full membership, the Turkish government has to adopt a new political agenda and legal changes such as announcing the National Program and enacting a law. Adoption of the National Program was considered one of the essential documents on the way of democratizing Turkey (H. Aslan, 2011). In this regard, there have been two significant constitutional changes in 2001 and 2004 besides other legal changes during the process. As a first concrete attempt was amending over 117 related articles of the constitution within the frame of National Program to become more appropriate to Copenhagen Political Criteria in 2001. Amendments that were made on determining priority areas are prevention of torture, freedom of thought, empowerment of democracy and civil authority, personal freedom and security, right of privacy, freedom of information, freedom of travel and settlement, freedom of forming an association and gender equality (T.C. Başbakanlık Avrupa Birliği Genel Sekreterliği, 2007). As it is seen from first and broad changes that significant steps Turkey has taken way for empowerment of democracy. In the wake of tangible political progression, European Council has stated that Turkey has been successful in complying with its national program in the first step through amendments in Leaken Summit hold in December 2001 (Erdemli, 2003).

In line with the National Program of Turkey, there has been prepared two harmonization packages that are entered into force in February and April 2002. There have been changes in the law of associations within the second package as well as other regulations, such as the law of political parties, press, civil servants, state security courts etc. The current article related to the condition to open an association was widened. To understand how civil society becomes an open platform for those who were formerly banned from participating in the association, there is a need to examine and analyze each of the amendments carefully.

In the case of criteria for the old association, the third and fourth subclause of article 4 was changed. The third subclause refers to people who prisoned more than five years, except for

felony has deserved the right to open an association. The fourth subclause indicates that official political party members who were expelled from the party or caused the party to be closed down were banned from being former of association within five years after Constitutional Court made closure decision on the party deserved the right to open an association. Another regulation regarding associations remains with the change in fifth subclauses that mainly paved the way for opening associations which feed on ethnic, linguistic and cultural diversity (T.C. Başbakanlık Avrupa Birliği Genel Sekreterliği, 2007).

Legal reforms made in 2002 under the guidance of the National Program have brought several positive improvements in the area of political and social life thus so fostered democratization in Turkey. Regarding civil society as the focus of this study, it will be seen that the scope of founder person is widened for associations which led to occurring social diversity through actively joining the social sphere of previously prevented people and identities. Another development is that some non-accepted fields of activities by the state were exceeded through accepting the multi-cultural structure of this society and enabling them to reflect their language, ethnicity, sects via forming an association via formal way. This also meant that the state is gradually backing away from its traditional role of community engineer by defining and deciding the conceivable identity of the community.

Under the seventh harmonization package recorded in 2003, limitations on the associational membership were eased for university students who were entitled to form an association. Thus, highly de-politized university students by the 1982 Constitution get a right to turn back the social sphere and public participation as well as the civil servants. Furthermore, 2004 new law on associations which mentioned variety points related to associations has entered into force. In general, this law has aimed to provide more freedom on the autonomy for domestic affairs of associations such as by transferring audit from the ministry of interior to board of auditing. In progress report of Commission, it is decided to support civil society also for making communication between candidate states. Therefore, CSOs have taken more role during the process to realize this aim, they have become part of various projects and activities. This shows that civilians get a chance to part of the accession process by civic participation as well as the states in formal. The process reached a peak with the start of full membership negotiations.

As a result of constitutional change, although many legal changes within the harmonization package, only a few groups of CSO's have adopted and benefited from enlargement of both their material and informational opportunities provided by National Agency of Turkey and EU. This does not mean that the EU-required reforms were not meet its objective; instead, it is not included in the majority of the civil society realm (Keyman, 2006). This situation leads to emerge criticism regarding the status of civil society. On the other hand, as a research done by researchers from Istanbul Bilgi University argues that although the majority of civil society organizations agree on positive effects of EU conditionality over the state up to some extent, the dialog between state and civil society is still missing in general (Keyman, 2006). Therefore, they have continued their support for the EU-accession process by calling to remain reforms and changes (Yılmaz, 2016). However, supporting civil society in many ways does not result in the flourishing civil society culture and awareness as well as the public activism. This is because political culture that civil activism as were not settled by society at all (Zihnioglu, 2013). I agree with these criticisms in the related absorption capacity of local civil societies in Turkey since change does not happen easily, especially in the social and dynamic platforms such as society. Even though the state has announced policies on the favor of CSOs, leaving the organization that has already accepted tradition cannot be easy. On the condition that the government sustains policies in the same direction with consistency, CSOs can raise their adaption capacity by the time progress. This situation is very associated with the government's domestic policies besides the EU enforcement. AK PARTY government was criticized by many in terms of decreasing willingness to EU membership on the ground of renouncing reforms (Askar Karakır & Idris, 2016). As a pro-arguments to this statement, AK PARTY's period years between 2005-10 named selective Europeanization by assessing the government's policy agenda, which was in favor of selecting issues on the base of local priorities rather than EU's ones (Yılmaz, 2016). Within this period, acts of some member states towards Turkey, Middle East foreign policy, especially regarding refugee issues and mutual criticism of both actors, lead to moving toward implementing the more independent domestic and international policy by Turkey (İçener, 2016). Not only the government but also some groups, including opposition party, nationalist front, Kemalist, and some conservative groups, have criticized the EU's approach toward issues of national security and sovereignty, which are very sensitive for Turkey. Therefore, pro-EU actors have not in the same view anymore (Yılmaz, 2016).

The period called a de-Europeanization period between 2011-2014 has characterized by contrasts between EU's demands and Turkey's policies by looking at legal reforms and changes regarding domestic politics. During the term, criticism came from other political parties and civil actors against the government regarding a lack of cooperation and consultation about the reform preparation process. This process has resulted in empowering the political authority of government in contrast to the declining power of civil society. Regarding state and NGO relations, the state has tended to act toward keeping its power on its own instead of sharing it. Therefore, previously made reforms as a result of the EU harmonization package in the early years of the fertile process has about to lose its value and power. The situation proves that political culture plays a crucial role in being effective and durable reforms.

Later, Turkey has experienced an undemocratic military coup attempt, which planned by civilian movement and exercised by some personals in the military on 15 July 2016. After that, state of emergency passed from parliament for three months at the beginning, but it is postponed for seven times so, released after two years. Due to the government has acted with a national security concern, many decisions regarding judicial, political, and social affairs are made quickly. In terms of analyzing state-civil society relations, the post-15 July process can be named as a breaking point by examining the characteristics of its feature. There are several dimensions by approaching the period to make a statement.

Firstly, as a result of statutory law announced in the official gazette 1125 association and 104 foundation was closed in the name of having a direct relationship with the terrorist organization on 18 October 2016 <sup>1</sup>. Members of these organizations were accused of being traitors and faced with legal sanctions, which lead to alienation and decreasing public participation in the eyes of the public. People who were not aware of secret plans against the state or passive member of one of the associations became disadvantageous. There are similarities between the current and post-1980 process in terms of de-politicization and alienation of a serious amount of people. Polarization is another outcome of this process due to the separated and lunatic fringe of people who situated on edge politically.

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<sup>1</sup> Statutory decree is accepted with the article no: 6749 in 18.10.2016 published in Resmi Gazete.

Secondly, in associated with the polarization within the population, National Will Platform, which founded in 2013 by pro-government civil society organizations to support the government's discourses and actions against the FETO<sup>2</sup> organs at that time. By the time passes, new members are added to the platform, 15 July platform has transformed civil hand of the government through reports and public announcements. Members of these platforms were called as a public benefactor because of standing with the government. Some well-known, widespread and education-based foundations get immovable properties such as dormitories from previously closed ones with the approval of the General Directorate of Foundations. Besides there has been some religiously-oriented civil society organizations or foundations that they are not a member of this platform did not get any benefit from the government as other organizations positioned in the secular side. To sum up, the state has preferred to support and collaborate with specific types of associations due to the mutual benefit that it has with them.

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<sup>2</sup> FETÖ is a group referred as terrorist organization by National Security Council in May 2016.

## CHAPTER 4

### ISLAMIST CIVIL SOCIETY IN TURKEY

Islamist civil society has begun to occur during the 1950s but it becomes visible in society starting from the 1980s visible (Turunc, 2007). Apart from commonly active secular and nationalist civil actors, they have emerged with Islamic oriented discourses and goals. One of the driving factors of the emergence of Islamist civil society is the introduction of liberal economic policies which is resulted in minimalizing state dominance in the social sphere. (Çaha, 2000). This process enabled Islamic groups to develop political, ideological initiatives as well as institutionalization and specialization especially after the 2000s (Sunar, 2018). Although introducing liberal policies led to the opening of more space for non-state actors and private sectors, rivalry relationship was dominant between Islamist civil society organizations and state.

Moreover, they were in a democracy demanding position towards the state in the pre-2000 period. Especially after AK PARTY comes to power, social diversification has increased by widening Islamist civil society organizations with various discourses. However, state-civil society relations have shaped the opportunity structure of organizations; therefore, the diversification of civil society has not freed from state influence. While some Islamist organizations overgrew and were accepted as a leading actor in the arena, others could not be positioned with the same degree.

This chapter analyzes the emergence of Islamist civil society organization and their relations with the state in three periods pre-1980, post-1980 and post-2000. The reason behind this categorization is that each period has its characteristic regarding the status of Islamist civil society. In line with this aim, religious and intellectual formations that paved the way toward organizational unity will be taken place as common sources of this formation. Another vital point is the role of religion in the social and political sphere and its impact on this process. Because religion is an unavoidable element for the human being in social life, which can be a legitimate source for any social formation, therefore, it is perceived as a component of civil society as well (Miller, 2011).

## **The emergence of Islamist Civil Society Organizations in Pre- 1980 Period**

Civil society is composed of voluntary members who seek the common good for its members or the whole society through solidarity. Civil society organizations can be categorized commonly based on their field of activity such as culture, education, health, social services, environment, international, religion, work organizations as such (Yeğen, Keyman, Çalışkan, & Tol, 2010). Another categorization can be based on ideology, the world view of a related organization such as Kemalist, Leftist, Liberal, Nationalist, Conservative, and Islamist (Sunar, 2018). Islamist civil society organizations can be linked with the ideology based and field of area-based categorization by taking their aims and activities into consideration. It should be noted that Islamist and conservative civil society organizations are slightly different, whereas sometimes they are used interchangeably. There is a motivation-based difference between conservative and Islamist civil society organizations, while conservatives are seeking to protect the current social structure; Islamists seek to spread Islamic values to the public and accommodate to society. Islamist CSOs rely on their activities with motivated religious references, which creates the significant difference between conservatives and Islamists (Sunar, 2018). With another definition regarding Islamist, according to Göle, Islamists are different from the Muslims; they seek to have Islamic consciousness and apply it to the social and political sphere in another means they aim to transfer knowledge into practice (Göle, 1997).

After defining Islamist civil society, now social, economic, and political environments, which lead to existing them is analyzed. Although Islamism was born after the 1950s, it became mature in the post-1980 period (Göle, 1997). Regarding the social environment, religious groups as the birthplace of various civic formations and intellectual developments have taken place in the pre-1980 period. In this period, religious orders, movements or group of people gathered around enlightened people and those can be considered as civil society as well as the formally organized association or foundation which occur in the post-1980 period. Therefore, in this part, mostly well-known religious movements and intellectual people will be mentioned in line with the Islamic civil groups.

Especially after the transition to a multi-party system, religious people have demanded practice their forbidden rituals, reflect their own identity to private space; therefore, Islamist groups are

the most prevalent component of civil society in Turkey (Çaha, 2000). The initial aim of these groups is to rise religious consciousness within society and help people self-educate themselves through unique training styles of movement; thus, each of them has emphasized different points related to their training modal. Nakşibendi Orders, as one of the well-known and old religious groups, played a formative role in the evolution of Islamic identity in Turkey by developing three patterns of interaction with the state: confrontation, withdrawal, and engagement (Yavuz, 2003: 23). Nakşibendi tradition became the ground for those who are involved in political, intellectual, and social life actively. The state does not support their activities; thus, so these activities have started to take place in private groups. Crucial religious leading figures had emerged within the shadow of this movement, and they have handled various issues. Such as Abdulaziz Bekkine (1895-1952), the spiritual leader of the Hareket movement of Nurettin Topçu, and Abdulhakim Arvasi, who played a critical leadership role in the print-based Buyuk Dogu(Greater Orient) intellectual circle (H. Yavuz, 2003). Mahmut Zaid Kotku as a leader of Gumushanevi- Nakşibendi Order had a very close relationship with Necmettin Erbakan and Turgut Özal in terms of advising on economic and social matters.

Another widespread religious group is called Suleymancis, which has started to take place from early ears up until right now. The names of the movement come from the Nakşibendi sheik Suleyman Hilmi Tunahan. The movement has actively carried its activities mainly in Istanbul and other cities of Anatolia as well as Europe. For instance, they have found more than 300 associations with exceeding 18 thousand members in Germany. Here as it is seen that religion as powerful motivation organizes people around the civil society organizations (Aydın, 2005).

Said Nursi is another contemporary Islamic scholar and a leading personality of the Nur movement. Nursi's writings thus profess three significant objectives: first, to raise the consciousness of Muslims; second, to refute dominant intellectual discourses of materialism and positivism; third, to recover collective memory by revising the shared grammar of society (Yavuz, 2003).

Apart from the religious orders and movements as a potential source of the formation of civil society within the religious society, intellectual figures such as scholars, writers, and poets have made an impact on society. Effects of intellectuals over society is not limited only with Turkey, other world-wide enlightened Muslim people such as Mawdudi, Sayyed-e Qutb, and Ali Shari'ati have built revivalist ideas in the minds of people (Kamali, 2001). There are intellectual



people in Turkey such as; Necip Fazıl, Sezai Karakoç, Ali Bulaç, İsmet Özel, and Nurettin Topçu can be considered as correspondent intellectuals mentioned above.

Necip Fazıl as one of the leading figures within the group of intellectuals who were the early thinker in the Republican era. Another influential Islamic intellectual and founder of the Resurrection movement in Turkey is Sezai Karakoç. He has his civilization metaphor, which is called resurrection as an alternative model of change to revolution and evolution by identifying the inner self-engine of social change. The magazine *Diriliş* is emphasized that Islam as a faith and civilization was well suited, after being appropriately reinterpreted, for addressing many of the ills of modernity (H. Yavuz, 2003).

Nurettin Topçu, founder of *Haraket Dergisi*, was influenced by Nakshibendi Abdulaziz Bekkine and French philosopher Maurice Blondel and sought to construct Turkish- Islamic nationalism. *Haraket* magazine became the center of the new Islamic and Anatolian Turkish identity movement. His main concern is to inner mobilization of the Anatolian population through “building their core center spiritually” to overcome alienation created by Kemalist form of top-down modernization. He rejects the Kemalist project of Westernization, believing that it creates a “split society and personality” by failing to offer a relevant code of ethics (M. Doğan, 2005).

Some examples of contemporary post-modern Islamic intellectuals that emerged after 1970 up until now are Bahri Zengin, Rasim Ozdenoren, Ersin Gurdogan, Erdem Beyazıt and İsmet Özel. These people have developed a critical approach toward popular and most desired notions, such as science, technology, civilization, and democracy (H. Yavuz, 2003).

Although political parties or movements are not part of the civil society, the experience of Turkish Islamist civil society is empowered by the emergence and rise of religiously- motivated political parties. Milli Görüş (National Outlook) Movement under the leadership of Necmettin Erbakan has given confidence to the religious segment of society in terms of being more active in the social and political arena, which pave the way to participate in civil society. In this regard, the political side of the historical development of Islamist civil society is analyzed within the scope of the Milli Görüş (National Outlook) Movement. The movement has taken Islamic discourses as a reference for its official party program and policies. However, the use of Islamist discourses in politics can be considered as an expression of tension between Western

modernity supported by secular elites and Turkish-Islamist identity represented by the majority of society (Göle, 1997). Therefore, political competition is a reflection of coming to the light of identity-based confrontation. In the 1970s the emergence of the Nationalist Action Party and the National Salvation Party that is evidence for flourishing ideologies out of dominant official state ideology paved the way for the rise of civil branches or associations in line with these ideologies. The appearance of new parties shows that demanding political participation and representation is something crucial enough to see the development of candidacy of non-customary actors toward public and political space (Çaha, 2000). This new situation could be assumed as a possible threat towards traditional state ideology regarding the protection of secular forms of the state. Although newly emerged movements have opened different windows within the Turkish Politics, they were mostly under state monitoring.

Until 1969 it is not possible to witness Islamist activities in the political arena, or openly proposals voice up by politicians due to oppressive regime of Kemalist state policies. Islamist groups have been out of the public and political life with their identity. Milli Görüş (National Outlook) Movement was born in these conditions in 1969 with a newly established political party called as National Order Party. Political conditions after the 1960 military coup and new constitution gave a decent chance to Islamist for founding a political party. Necmettin Erbakan had always been the most important political figure and has taken a leading role over party formation. The ideology of the movement was formulated based on the “truth,” which is defined path of prophets, not the pharaoh. And Turkish politics came across new discourses and notions firstly used by them, for instance, morality, just order, just distribution, and a new world order based on rightness (Erbakan, 2006). Notion of the nation was firstly used to refer to the Nation of Abraham in the Quran rather than Turkish nationalism. Party was closed down in the name of threatening secular nature of the republic by the decision of the constitutional court. Another party in the same ideological line called the National Salvation Party was established. Party also stressed equal distribution of wealth and prevent the unbalanced distribution of state resources to the public. They have the dream of building Just Order in Turkey and later in the World, which will be the end of the poverty and victim for weak people. One of the essential projects of the party “Islam common market” lead to accommodate ideas of Islamic World in rather than a historical understanding of Islam. This understanding had begun to prevalent in contemporary Islamic groups and movements as well (Çaha, 2005).

Religiously motivated discourses lead to gain support from middle-class, merchants, artisans, and rural people. Although Islamists have become visible in the political arena by being a coalition partner with other parties, this was not influential as much as the Welfare Party and its ruling experience in the 1990s. However, the political background of Milli Görüş (National Outlook) through National Order and National Salvation Parties can be considered a success story in terms of legitimizing exerting religious groups' authority over the political structure within the scope of the secular state. Therefore, this development is crucial enough to witness control function role of religion in Turkey (Toprak, 2000).

### **Islamist Civil Society Organizations in Post-1980 Era**

According to typical time categorization over Islamist civil society organizations, the post-1980 period is characterized by the entrepreneurship of Islamist civil society organizations in terms of the transformation of traditional Islamic groups into the formal body. Mostly, the common source of newly founded Islamist organizations or foundations was based on Islamic cemaats or movements, and they have created legal entity through forming foundation with taking their possession under guarantee (Sunar, 2018). New Islamic cemaats also gain power as well in the 1990s (Tosun Erdoğan, 2001). Unlike the other social groups, Islamist organizations have reached wide-range activity and impact in the social, cultural, and political arena (Bulaç, 2005). In line with the same argument, Göle also has stated that Islamic Movements have been the second most prevalent groups following liberal movements composed of newly rising actors, classes, and urbanized people (Göle, 2000).

There have been various internal and external factors behind the prevailing of Islamist groups with the rising consciousness about their identity in this period. Because I examined the internal factors in the third chapter, I briefly mention them here. The first one is the lack of finding an alternative value system as an alternative to Islam which enable to substitute the inner world of a people for the Muslim major of its people in Turkey. The second reason is associated with modernist critiques of group of intellectual people who have trained under modern institutions but later developed post-modern criticisms against the modernism especially toward modernist Kemalist institutions in Turkey. Their critique leads to open de-sanctifying of state to the discussion by the public. The third reason is associated with the economic policies of the

state resulting from unjust income distribution, which was stressed by Islamists, Welfare Party in politics (Çaha, 2000).

Regarding external reasons, the first one is Turkey's complicated and long path on the European Union linked with the Muslim majority identity of Turkey, which created mistrust and hopelessness within the people. In the same line, Europeans attitudes toward genocides of Bosnia and Azerbaijan have caused religious people to criticize European values on human rights, democracy, freedom, and peace (Çaha, 2000).

Furthermore, through discussing and facing contemporary topics of the time, such as democracy, human rights, civil society, and pluralism, they have exceeded their traditional issues. This can be considered a significant social challenge because religiously motivated groups have confronted with the repressive face of the state and state-led social actors. On the other hand, considering these notions by Islamists has shown that they have attempted to exist within democratic structure peacefully. Thus so, they have supported the idea to maintain state neutrality, open market and rising volume of international trade to sustain the liberal character of the state rather than directive type (Çaha, 2004).

When it comes to the late 1990s, 28 February 1997 post-modern military coup was made against the Welfare Party-led coalition government as a breaking point against the positive developments in the post-1980 period. This event endangered tremendous pressure over religious-oriented civilians, civil society organizations, foundations, associations, and religious orders. Suppressive and undemocratic implications of state resulted in the introverting of Islamist civil society, including religious citizens, groups, foundations, and associations. To nullify Islamic motivated formations from the social and political life, political elites have labeled several civil branches such as 19 newspapers, 20 television stations, 51 radio stations, 110 magazines, 800 schools, 1,200 student hostels, and 2,500 associations as Islamic reactionist bodies (H. Yavuz, 2003). These are the primary closed foundation in the 28 February Process; Milli Gençlik Vakfı, Zöhre Ana Ali Vakfı, Zehra Vakfı, Sosyal Hizmet Vakfı, Sabah Eğitim ve Kültür Vakfı, Gebze Hizmet Vakfı, Davet Eğitim, Kültür ve Dayanışma Vakfı, Hak-Yol Vakfı, Vahdet Dostluk ve Eğitim Vakfı and so on (Akgüngör, n.d.). One of the most active and well-known pro-Welfare Party youth association called National Youth Foundation (MGV) was closed down, and its all properties were transferred to the General Directorate of Foundations (Haber, 2004)

On the other hand, as an example of social and psychological pressure over the religious-oriented civil society organizations, Müsiad, as one of the most influential business associations and its members were faced with tagging operations. Moreover, the president of the association was sentenced to imprisonment in the name of provoking people to hatred and hostility by considering religious and sectarian differences (Ay, 2009).

Social discrimination was implied against the religious people as state and state-led non-state elites' policies. TÜSİAD as non-state but the pro-state association has played a role in the resignation of Erbakan (Smith, 2002). Even Turkey has experienced several military coups in the past; the state did not explicitly target any group of society as to how it is done in this process.

Although several actors supported the post-modern military coup, here only civil actors such as civil society organizations and media are discussed. The non-military actors who played an active role over the preparation of social background trigger the military to interfere in political government. This created criticism over civil society actors such as some civil society actors, media groups and provocateurs in the undemocratic intervention. Dilemma was seen with unifying five works organizations DİSK, TİSK, TESK, TOBB, and TÜRK-İŞ and their announcement about their support to the decision of National Security Council regarding Refah-Yol Government. They have legitimized their undemocratic manner by organizing several press conferences with following statement "we adhere to democracy, republic, secularism, the rule of law, Atatürk's principles and reforms." This is a crucial contradiction in terms of the democratizing role of civil society. According to the most accepted theory on civil society, the existence of a functioning civil society is considered a prerequisite for democracy through providing public participation of voluntary actors. However, the current situation was not in the same line with how it is stated in theory. Civil society has organized against the one other civil society group and political party because of their identity and vision, and supported military coup, which is a similar term uncivil society mentioned in the second chapter.

As another driving factor, media has played a crucial role in shaping public opinion and triggering the military to take over against the Welfare Party coalition government. From the beginning of the coalition government to be formed, media has taken a leading role over the criticism against the government through both visual and press media (Ak Partyınar, 2001). In this process, the media and military have engaged with each other unprecedentedly and it is

resulted in getting the influence of media under the army and acted as means in favor of its interests. From the several newspaper headlines regarding the National Security Council meeting, it can be easily understood that they take aside against the government openly. During the week of NSC decisions, Headlines of Milliyet newspaper were such: *En Uzun Gün* (28.02.1997), *Erbakan Geriyor* (26.03.1997), *Krize MGK molası* (31.03.1997). When it comes to Sabah newspaper, some of the headlines were the following: *Zehir Zemberek* (01.03.1997), *Paşa Paşa İmzaladı* (06.03. 1997), *Hoca Yine Ateşle Oynuyor* (07.03.1997). Headlines of Hürriyet newspaper were as *Hoca Direniyor* (03.03.1997), *Ya Uy Ya Çekil* (04.03.1997), *Aynen İmzaladı* (06.03.1997) (Işık, 2018). Similar newspaper headlines can be enhanced, but there are enough to show acts of printed media in this process. So that Erbakan was forced to resign from his seat. Newspapers and mainstream press groups created psychological pressure over religious people who are Welfare Party electorate in general.

Further discussions can be continued about possible reasons behind this situation that political culture and institutionalized state structure came to ground as discussion points. Unless embedded democratic culture has adopted both by the public and state through strong institutions and political parties, civil society can attempt undemocratic events (Encarnación, 2002). Regarding the effect of political culture of the society, pro-coup civil society has not faced any public opposition from the rivalry group at that time because of the weak social roots of the Welfare Party and religious people. I argue that because of the characteristic of Turkish democracy, which was not born instead crafted by the traditionally powerful elites who gave legitimacy to themselves making change, modification over the issues about the state. Therefore, people could have enough time to digest democratic culture so they could not challenge against undemocratic implications.

28 February Process can be considered as a turning point for the religious segment of society in Turkey. From individual to business groups and also highly posited bureaucrats were accused of being the most significant threat against the survival of republican order; therefore, they have forced to be removed from public and social spaces. The goal of the elites was to close possible ways for people to involve in civil and political affairs. However, regarding the state and civil society relations at the end of the 1990s, there has been a differentiation between civil society in terms of positioning with the state. The first group has called partly independent

from a state that they mostly composed conservative organizations and questioning the pressure of state over the society. Other pro-state groups had supported the type of determinative state in terms of monitoring political, economic, ideological, and cultural affairs (Çaha, 2004). From the beginning to the 2000s, the relationship between the state and Islamist civil society was rivalry and uncooperative, and this was escalated at the end of the 90s.

### **Islamist Civil Society Organizations in Post-2000 Era**

In this part, the general characteristics of Islamist civil society organizations and also similarities and differences between previous time are analyzed. State-civil society relations are examined under the case of Islamist ones. In the first period of 2000s general picture seems more favorable in comparison with the previous experiences in terms of democratic participation and human rights. This is due to the increased level of importance of EU accession in the policy agenda of the ruling party and majority of people's demand. By the introduction and implementation of liberal policies, people have started to raise their desire for further political and economic developments from the current or candidate ruling elites (Keyman & Öniş, 2007). In terms of Islamic civil societies, new actors started to emerge with a more professional profile, and they have become part of the public actors by the time passes (Zihnioglu, 2018).

There have been some changes and challenges in this period in the body of Islamic oriented civil society organizations in terms of funding, scope of activities, relation with state and more in line with the socio-political changes in Turkey. While some elements can be analyzed under the name of internal changes, others are under external changes. Regarding internal changes, Islamist civil society organizations in this period have entered into formalization and specification process (Sunar, 2018). Due to the harsh condition over Islamic movements or orders after the 28 February Process, Islamist civil society organizations, which were mostly based on religious groups, required having formal structure within the constitutional border. Colloquies inside and outside of the country are paved the way for having international networks and field of the arena. In terms of field of organization, they have also tended to specialize in one specific area such as women, charity, education, democracy, and research rather than focusing on such as educational activities which resulted in diversification of areas (Zihnioglu, 2018). In this regard, especially charity organizations, have widened their working space across the globe and carried humanitarian aid by taking an active role. As different from

previous periods, organizations were tended to present their identity, activities and goals publicly through their printed materials or websites (Sunar, 2018).

Funding is another internal element of change that also differs from the previous period in Islamist civil society organizations. Traditional fund sources of these were generally based on religious duties or aids such as zakat, sadaka. In contrast, current Islamic civil society organizations also financed by Islamic oriented entrepreneurial and business groups (Zihnioglu, 2018). However, in the post-2000 era, they have started to get external funds depending on the new project-based working style. Developing projects related to their specialization area was considered as a source of income (Sunar, 2018). At the same time, this new type of working created a partnership with state and non-state actors. Without any doubt, they have benefited from AK PARTY's power in terms of funding and projects which become civil supporter of economic and social policies of the government and Islamic charity associations replaced for the welfare state through providing social assistance to people (Zihnioglu, 2018). Further details are given in the part of state-civil society relations in the following section.

Specialization arena or field of activity is also widened with the diversification of actors and issues in this period. While the previous generation has mainly focused on spreading Islamic consciousness across the population and standing for realizing activities in line with their identity, current civil society organizations have varied their agenda and activities. But they have sustained the same fundamental concerns (Sunar, 2018). Among the new Islamic groups, some criticized social and economic policies of AK PARTY and stand close with the leftist groups such as Anti-capitalist Muslims, Justice Platform. However with the rise of nationalist discourses, especially after 15 July Coup Attempt, new types of religiously motivated nationalist groups have emerged with the name of *Osmanlı Kalpler* (Ottoman Hearts) and *Ak Kalpler* (Ak Hearts) (Zihnioglu, 2018). I argue that they have kind of created a new understanding by accommodating religious concepts such as solidarity and unity with nationalistic discourses.

Regarding the women movements which have begun to rise after the 1980s and become active during the late 1990s, new changes have participated in the public voice of women with their variety of mission and vision. While the majority of them were stressing on the rights and freedoms, especially against social and political outcomes of the post-modern coup, now with making progress on this issue, they have diverted their interest to other topics. For instance,



the main aim of “Women at Mosques” is opposing the patriarchal structure of mosques, where small space was allocated for women and rising women participation in mosque prayer (Zihnioglu, 2018).

Regarding external factors, one of the leading roles has undertaken by the EU harmonization process, especially the first period of AK PARTY ruling. Turkey’s historical journey on the way of EU in terms of civil society was stated with details in the previous chapter; therefore, a summary is given in this part rather than repeating a similar context. Deepening and enlargement policies through legal packages have required to open more space for civil society and raise its standards, which pave the way for a transparent, efficient, and responsible state through civic participation. As public participation is associated with the notion of active citizenship reminds the terms of rights, freedoms, and responsibilities, which contributes rise of consciousness of citizenship (Yeğen et al., 2010). The de-Europeanization process is caused civil society to become narrow and limited as a result of several domestic events, which will be mentioned in detail later.

### **Islamist Civil Society and State Relations in the AK PARTY Period**

In this part, state- Islamist civil society relations are analyzed by focusing on level and type of interaction throughout the time. The most prevalent type of relationship between civil society and public institutions is based on delivering public services and participation in the political decision process (Ekmekci et al., 2015). The position of civil society is shaped by the character of mutual relationships such as gift, dependent and independent. While civil society can be considered as a mediator institution for transiting public services to society, it can also be actively participating in the decision-making procedure as the representative body of the public. By assessing the feature of the mutual stance of two-actor, there can evaluate the level of democracy according to the liberal approach. This part examines types of bilateral relationships and make inferences regarding the level of democracy and stance of Islamist civil societies in a given time.

Although it is mentioned before, election promises of AK PARTY regarding EU accession and democratization resulted in rising interaction with the EU and emphasizing on the importance of civil society (Heper & Yildirim, 2011). Attitudes of the state toward Islamic actors has been

changing by taking reference to EU pressure on democratizing Turkey (Turam, 2004). After they came to power through electoral success, the promised EU alliance led them to support liberals, civil society, a conservative democrat (Kaya, 2015). One of the leading differences of Islamist civil society in this period, in general, is that they were standing against the state due to their identity, value, vision and mission but after AK PARTY came to power most of these have formed harmonic stance against the state (Zihnioglu, 2018). This change was not limited only to the civil society, but also intellectuals and leading people have changed their discourses about political thought is associated with their relationship, official or unofficial, with the AK PARTY (Köseoglu, 2019). I argue that this significant difference leads to change in many dynamics, which is mentioned later in this part.

Religiously motivated charity organizations have increased their scope and capacity both inside and outside of the country. There has been developed mutual help between these associations and states such that state has eased the procedural tasks for them; they fulfill requirements expected from the welfare state; therefore, charity organizations undertake the social welfare promoter role of the state (Kaya, 2015). When the organization has a similar view with the country, it might collaborate with the state and become a non-state partner on a foreign policy of the state (Çelik & İşeri, 2016). For instance, one of the well-known Islamic motivated charity and human rights organization IHH (Humanitarian Relief Foundation) has also utilized opportunities of conservative government in terms of de-bureaucratizing on the way of accessing risky needy places. Not only IHH, but also other charity organs of religious groups have increased their internal activities such as sacrificing, water well projects, sheltering for refugees, and displaced people. External activities done by charity organizations have created a significant impact on the occurrence of positive image of Turkey in the case of humanitarian assistance in needy places, which contributes the soft power.

In connection with state-NGO relations take place with several types and bring about various characteristics, the government has preferred to name some NGOs as a public benefit in the sense of sharing a similar view. I argue that stressing and supporting some organizations has become apparent with some important internal events such as Gezi Park Protests and 15 July Coup Attempt. In line with the rising concern on security and stability, mutual support-based relation has become more visible between government and organizations because of standing

with the government against the opponent movements and events. This situation is triggered polarization through “us versus them” view among society.

Some Islamic motivated civil society organizations have close relations with the state institutions, and they do projects in favor of the state. Some organizations which were found by the initiative of governing cadre and close relative of high degree governors have taken active role in civil society. The staff of the board of trustees or directors of these organizations show that there is an organic and parallel relation between these associations and government. For instance, son of President Bilal Erdoğan is currently president of World Ethnosport Confederation member of the high advisory board in Tügva, Okçular Vakfı and İlim Yayma Vakfı, TÜRGEV and TGSP<sup>3</sup>. Daughter of President, Sümeyye Erdoğan-Bayraktar, is also a member of the board of director KADEM<sup>4</sup>, another daughter, Esra Albayrak, is a member of the board of directors in TÜRGEV<sup>5</sup>. All these stated associations and foundations are very active and prevalent in the civil society arena. It is hard for these organizations to oppose any decision of government due to organic relation with the state. One similar example can be that president Erdoğan joined the opening ceremony of TUGVA and reminded young their responsibilities in his speech.

Participation of President in the opening ceremony of a civil society organization is not a new situation; however, regular meetings and close relations between them make it different. Not only opening ceremony, but he also attended critical annual meetings of foundation and stressed their existential value with the statement of “we will open a new period for our country altogether.” This news was presented on the website of foundation with the headline of “President Erdoğan reminded us of our responsibilities in TUGVA organization meeting” (Tügva, 2018). As it is seen that most prevailing civil society organizations have become state-dependent positions through their close relations and collaborations regarding common policy goals instead of having autonomous stance.

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<sup>3</sup> <http://tgsp.org.tr/Main/YonetimKurulu> access date: 20.04.2020

<sup>4</sup> <https://kadem.org.tr/yonetim-kadrosu/> access date: 20.04.2020

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.turgev.org/tr/genel-kurul-uyeleri/1/> access date: 20.04.2020

There are also Islamist civil society organizations that have similar working areas with mentioned ones above, but they do not have a natural link with the state as well as attained responsibilities by state; therefore, they can deserve character “independent.” Mazlumder is one of the independent Islamic motivated associations found in 1991 will be mentioned in the next chapter with details.

Secular civil societies continue their activities, but not ideologically vocal as in the past. Their enjoyment in public benefit status has shifted during the AK PARTY era toward more religious, and AK PARTY favored groups (*Trends in Turkish Civil Society*, 2017). They have actively raised their voices and concerns in Republic Protests just before the presidential election in major cities of Turkey in 2007. In parallel to AK PARTY’s strengthening power through election success, the activism of secular organizations were decreased (Zihnioglu, 2018).

To sum up, Islamic civil society has become visible in public space after the 1980 era, although it has existed before with religious-based orders and groups. Therefore, the journey of Islamic civil society has examined in three periods, respectively; pre-1980, post-1980, and post-200 period. Islamist civil society has differed in each three periods in terms of formalization. First-period religious groups and enlightened people were the main actors of civil society, and their first activity was based on raising awareness about Islamic consciousness and spreading to the public. First-time Islamic motivated actors emerged in public space with their identity reflected in political programs and discourses, which was a challenge in Modern Turkish history. Milli Görüş (National Outlook) movement and related civil organs, and supporters have faced with elite confrontation in the name of preserving secular and republican nature of the state. Elites were fine with practicing religion in the private sphere of people, but they have not faced Islam in the public sphere before; thus, Islamic actors have come across state opposition and suppression, especially in politics and civil society.

Post-1980 period was characterized by raising and spreading Islamic civil society, which becomes one of the most active actors in that era due to the liberalization of economy, social and political spheres. The first time Islamic-motivated political party came to power, and its public supporters, including business associations. Those associations have gained self-confidence, which reflected in their activity. But this process has lasted with the 28 February

Postmodern Coup against the Welfare Party government, which was not affected only politicians, but also civil society has influenced deeply. Islamist civil society has a common opposing stance against the state until the 2000s.

Due to the post-2000 period is integrated with AK PARTY's term of government, implications and policies of AK PARTY has directed feature of civil society. In line with the foreign policy goal on the EU's membership, the development of civil society has been fostered by an external factor. Legal changes were made to pave the way for improvement in civil society, which was a prerequisite by the commission. Interior demand for democratizing country raised from public and political actors, which made this process easier thus so, Islamic civil society has benefited from this favorable situation. They have entered formalization and professionalization processes through improving their capacity in terms of scope of activity, funding, networking, and collaboration. They have initiated contacts with state offices through projects. However, these positive developments were interrupted several times with essential events such as Gezi Park Protests and 15 July failed coup. Following these events, the government has taken security measures against the opposing social actors who lead to narrowing and limiting civil society with the rigid implication. Political polarization has emerged as a result of this process; society divided into two camps as pro-government and others. Civil society has also got affected by the social atmosphere, while secular and conservative segregation seen as two main camps; conservatives also have differentiated within themselves in terms of political view. While some Islamist organizations stand with the AK PARTY by approving their policies and functioning, others have shown an independent stance and keep a distance between themselves and AK PARTY.



## CHAPTER 5- ISLAMIST CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATION: MAZLUMDER

In this chapter, I will present experiences and views of one of the Islamic oriented civil society organization, Mazlumder (*Association for Human Rights and Solidarity for Oppressed*) regarding its field of activity, effects of democratization over civil society, state-civil society relations, and effects of EU membership process over civil society by taking reference to monthly printed magazine printed by Istanbul Mazlumder called as “Mazlumder Bülten” interviews held with the four board of administration from Istanbul Branch of the association. In this way, I aimed to make inferences about the effects of democratization through widening civil society space of Islamist civil society and state-Islamist civil society relations by analyzing Mazlumder.

### **The Place of Mazlumder within Islamist Civil Society**

After 1980 military coup, many people have faced with human violations especially unjust custodies, trials, torture in prison became agenda for victims and their families. People from Islamist front have also witnessing the violations but, there was not institutionalized organization to defend their right at that time. Mehmet Pamak who is the founder of Mazlumder in Ankara has thought that they can develop more powerful and sustainable solutions against the violations via forming an association rather struggling with personally. Mazlumder has founded on 28 January 1991 by 54 people. Afterward, Istanbul Branch of Mazlumder was founded by the efforts of Ayşe Böhürler, Hatice Öncül, Sabiha Ünlü and Nezihe Ay (Ramazanoğlu, 2011).

Highly disputed issues from the time Mazlumder was founded were; Kurdish, headscarf issue, tortures in prison. Mazlumder has taken initiative on these hot topics and organized seminars, street protests and print bulletins. Especially regarding to Kurdish issue, while religious people thought that pan- Islamism is the only solution but, issue has not reduced to concrete. They have firstly organized Kurdish Conference with the participation of intellectuals and thinkers. Although, from the beginning they were labelled as pro-Kurdish groups but they have ignored these and maintained their attitude over the issue (Ünsal, 2011).

On the other hand, over the headscarf issue Mazlumder has spent critical effort to announce issue by publishing the personal cases in the Bülten and organizing or attending street protest throughout the years. The ban on usage of the headscarf in public spaces triggered reaction and defend religious-based human rights discourses by a group of people who are vulnerable to this issue lead to the formation of Mazlumder (Öztekin, 2009). Their initial activities and

reports have focused on the freedom and rights of religious people. (M. H. Yavuz, 2000). Starting from first issue, headscarf issue has taken place in the Bülten magazine published by the Istanbul Mazlumder.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, 1997 was declared as headscarf year because of the injustices and violations made against the headscarf wearing women and to get rid of this violation (MAZLUMDER, 1997).

They state their focus as preserving and developing human rights, freedom, and ending human rights violations both inside and outside Turkey without ethnic, religious, cultural discrimination on oppressed people<sup>7</sup>. As it is seen in the Bülten Magazine, not only internal violations but also international cases were conveyed the public. In order make comprehensive observations and analysis, activity area-based voluntarily working groups were founded under the board of management. Administrative, culture, fundamental rights, prisons, Southeastern, international relations and press, humanitarian aid and finance committees are the main committees (Mazlumder İstanbul Şubesi Haber Bülteni, 1996). Human right committee has launched aid programs for the needy people in abroad (MAZLUMDER, 1997). Each issue of the magazine has included various violations with related to mentioned commissions. Mazlumder is the only example with its operation field and framework aiming at the rising human rights standards within the Islamist segment of the society (Vicini, 2018). It is also leading association in Islamic World through its reports, publications and attitudes which made it trustful throughout the years (Mercan, 2011). One of the most important success of Mazlumder is that, it has systematized the struggle of religious oriented people in Turkey.

Various statements can be made about the Islamic identity of association. Formation philosophy of the association is the biggest indicator for characteristic of Mazlumder. They have adopted Islamic human right perspective which reflected with the universal version of the notion. So, its founding members who have religious identity automatically ascribe a religious-oriented status to the association (Kadioglu, 2005). Not only founding members, but also current members have the same motivation and value, which is mentioned by interviewees from Mazlumder. They have consider working for human rights as worship, because struggling for justice, goodness and human rights were promoted by the teaching of Prophet and verses of Quran. Moreover, supportive sentences stated by interviewees from Mazlumder which shows their identity with following statement: “We have Quran based human rights

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<sup>6</sup> Achieve of Bülten Magazine is available in IDP web site: <https://katalog.idp.org.tr/dergiler/289/mazlumder>

<sup>7</sup> See: <https://www.mazlumder.org/tr/main/pages/hakkimizda-biz-kimiz/65> accessing date: 26.04.2020



understanding". "Mazlumder was found by Muslim people, and therefore our stance and actions represent this identity," "We have friends in Mazlumder whose main reference behind their voluntarism works on the way of preventing injustices is a religious notion." Arguing that Islamic civilization contains the origin of universal human rights through referencing Hilf al Fudul<sup>8</sup> and Verse of the Quran, which lead them to regret western monopoly over the subject. Within the Hilf al Fudul, those who participated in the meetings have promised not to permit injustices in Mecca (Ekici, 2006). Medine agreement is also taken as reference by the members of the association. Therefore, they have aimed to take a way with national references that based on religious, historical and cultural background (Dilipak, 2011).

Although identity is not an absolute determinant over issues to work by the organization, but it has influence deciding on the priority of cases (Yelken, 2007). For instance, in the case of the gender issue, they refuse to consider that within the border of human rights by taking Islamic principles as reference (Tanriverdi, 2011). While the association adopted religious outlook, non-Islamic issues, including Kurdish, leftist, and Armenian issues, were supported by a multi-cultural and multi-lingual manner toward cultural violations. For instance, the Kurdish issue is dealt with from this approach by the Mazlumder (M. H. Yavuz, 2000). Therefore, from the beginning, they have widened their scope of issues regarding human rights (Sarkissian & Özler, 2013). Rise of specialization within association made an impact over the enlarging range of matters throughout the years (Plagemenn, 2002).

Principles of association are stated on the official website as follows;<sup>9</sup>

- It doesn't depend on any political or philosophical idea.
- It supports free speech of any political idea or opinion.
- It supports any action that is the benefit of human rights and freedom, regardless of the source of the action.
- It is against any action that harms human rights and freedom, regardless of the owner of the work. Independent from the conditions or the conjecture of the environment, it always supports human rights and will support it continuously.

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<sup>8</sup> An agreement was made by some of the Quraysh Tribe and also attended by Prophet Mohammed to help people suffering injustices in Mecca. See: <https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/hilful-fudul> accessing date: 26.04.2020

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.mazlumder.org/tr/main/pages/hakimizda-ilkelerimiz/8> accessing date: 27.04.2020

It considers human right violation and persecution as every kind of political, economic, social, and legal attempt, which is not disaccorded with principles of human rights, dignity, and justice.<sup>10</sup> To develop and protect human rights and freedom, periodical, non-periodical, written, and visual publications compose the working fields of Mazlumder. Besides publications, seminars, conference, panel, exhibition, and similar activities are organized by the association. It provides material, moral and legal support for people and their families suffering injustices about human rights without expecting something in return.

As addition to regular activities first time, Istanbul Branch of Mazlumder has published Human Rights Research Journal with the participation of academicians and researchers under the leadership of Ahmet Mercan. They have started to organize “Haklarımız” seminar series to teach citizens and various group of people their constitutional rights and responsibilities. They have also organized “School of Human Rights” to initiate people about theoretical aspect, implications of human rights (Mazlumder istanbul Şubesi, 2004).

Mazlumder has experienced internal disputes within the administrative cadre in terms of stance toward government in 2008 and 2017. They have overcome this dispute by organizing general congress and leaving some former teammates in a democratic way in the eyes of current board of Mazlumder. Common problem of both disputes is about civil society and state relations in general. Discourses and reports of former group were accused being opposition to government flagrantly. In the years between 2006-2008 president Ayhan Bilgen has stated that being human activists is perceived as opposition to government in the Bülten Magazine (Mazlumder istanbul Şubesi, 2004).

On the other hand, former president of Mazlumder Ahmet Faruk Ünsal has argued that they have never used biased attitude or discourses about events in Southeastern. They have only publicized the human rights violations made by both government and illegal organization. This neutral manner was criticized by some other members of Mazlumder and offered a general congress.

The Head office of Mazlumder was in Ankara until 2017, as a result of general board changes in 2017, the head office was transferred to Istanbul, and Ankara Branch was closed. It has branches currently in Adana, Adıyaman, Ağrı, Akyazı, Ankara, Istanbul, Konya, Malatya, and

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<sup>10</sup> <https://www.mazlumder.org/tr/main/pages/hakimizda-ilkelerimiz/8> accessing date: 06.06.2020

Mardin. Mazlumder has experienced internal clashes within the board of general as a result of disputes, a group of people have left from the association. And 16 branches of association were closed as a result of an extraordinary congress held on 19 March in 2007. President Ramazan Beyhan has explained the dissolution process in the interview was made with him as:

A year ago, we saw that things did not go well, and the axis shifted... Mazlumder was formed with people coming from different views, different traditions, but persevering the justice and awareness of rights was the common aim of these people. But today we see that Head Office of Mazlumder and some branches have gathered around the same ideology and one dominant political view. The language used in the reports of these branches showed that we were right. We offered an extraordinary general assembly meeting, saying that this attitude is not correct, and the association deviated from its founding principles... As a result of the court decision call committee was founded consisting of three people and invited all delegates to the general assembly to meet on 19 March, and the representatives convened extraordinarily in Ankara. Some representatives did not come and boycotted this meeting. The administrative board was changed as a result of the congress, and it is decided to move head office from Ankara to Istanbul. Another decision was to close the branches in the provinces where diversity was in difficulty... In the closed branches, people with different backgrounds were vexed and somehow removed from the association, and remained in the hands of few people and turned into a motif that they have just managed in the past... Another thing is that the delegates have become an increasingly politized...The public already had a problem with this. We had to intervene here (Kılınç, 2017).

Following to statements made by current president Beyhan, one of the members of board form Istanbul Mazlumder has made similar explanations regarding this issue and said that

People from the South Eastern region have prepared biased reports at certain times because of the atmosphere of the area where they live have made an impact on them (Interviewee 3, 2019).

On the other hand, member of the Mazlumder Emre Berber has made explanations regarding the period in the interview made him with these statements below:

Disagreements have emerged during some critical events, and the conflict between the Istanbul Branch and the rest of the branches of Mazlumder goes back to old. This disagreement has an administrative dimension as well as a political aspect. Both groups have had different outlooks, not only Kurdish issue, but also Gezi Events, Syrian issue, an allegation of corruption, and all similar issues. This situation unavoidably corresponds with differentiation in the forms of proximity to existing political power and independence from political power. Istanbul branch has developed a closer stance to power in all critical issues of the country. The dispute between Istanbul Mazlumder with former Head office has a direct relationship with this stance. (Kılınç, 2017).

The current president made two opposite views on the source of dispute between actors of Mazlumder Ramazan Beyhan, one of the Board Member of Istanbul Mazlumder, and former member of the association. There is news regarding the issue in the newspapers that similar explanations were made the responsible people<sup>11</sup>. I argue that state-civil society relation as a focus issue of this study as an essential dynamic that has played a decisive role in explaining the internal dispute of Mazlumder. Although none of the sides blame opponents with being pro-government or opposition to the government, the main disagreement is about relationship with the power. Even Mazlumder states their principles on its website, and the members made verbal explanations regarding the independency from the state, but the same issue lead to disaccord between the association.

Although people from the splinter group have argued that current Mazlumder take side with the government, therefore, they cannot publish conflicting reports against the state, I have witnessed the opposite situation during the interview made with the Istanbul Mazlumder. Commonly four of the interviewees stressed the importance of the independence of civil society organizations to work freely. To guarantee freedom, as they state that they sensitive to the financial source of the association. And also, Mazlumder has published reports about human rights violations in the state of emergency and refugee tragedy in the border of Turkey-Greece. In these reports, the government's policies were criticized because of causing human rights violations (Öner, Avli, Yılmaz, & Dıvrak, 2020), (*OHAL Raporu*, 2018). By taking these reports as a reference, I can argue that Mazlumder has still publicize human rights violations without considering the reaction of political authorities. Their relationship with state authorities remains.

After giving introductory information about history, principles and place of Mazlumder within Islamist civil society organizations experiences, and views regarding democratization and its influence over civil society, state-civil society relations, especially in the case of Islamist and the effects of the EU negotiation will be taken place in the following section. To get information about stated issues, I interviewed with four members from the board of Directorate in Istanbul Branch of Mazlumder and posed several questions to them. Therefore, though transferring personal views, which are a reflection of the association at the same time, making an inference

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<sup>11</sup> See more news on the issue in; ("Mazlumder Genel Başkanı Ramazan Beyhan," 2018), ("MAZLUMDER siyasi büro gibi davranıyor," 2016).

in terms of reaching to the general picture of interested issues will be possible. I have categorized questions and responses of interviewees into four main groups such as; challenges faced by civil society organizations, civil society- state relation with specific to Mazlumder, democracy- civil society relations, and effect of the EU negotiation process over civil society. Regarding the physical and ethical features of the interview, after I get approval for my interview structure from the ethical committee of Istanbul Sehir University, I have interviewed four members of the board of Directorate in the Mazlumder İstanbul Office. Before starting the interview, interviewees were informed about the content aim of the research. And they gave verbal permission for audio record, and I posed the questions one by one within the context of stated headlines above.

### **Challenges Faced by Civil Society Organizations**

Civil society in Turkey does not follow a linear path; instead, it is affected by economic, political, and social events. Civil society and its actors have faced some difficulties, such as state intervention, financial sources, and so on. Islamist civil society, as a part of the whole society, has also come across with several difficulties. In this part, I have posed questions to four of the interviewees to understand the leading challenge facing civil society in specific to Islamist civil society in Turkey. It will be possible to make comparison between periods in terms of degree and specification of problems, which enables us to see changes and transformations.

This section consists of questions related to the most significant difficulty facing civil society in general and specific to Islamist civil society organizations and places of financial sources within civil society. Different approaches have developed for the question on the issue by four interviewees. Polarization and seen as one of the most significant difficulties for civil society as follows.

On the condition that the concept of civil society is limited with only right or specific ideology based CSOs, the biggest threat is facing them as polarization by the state by following the two ways. Firstly, the state tries organization to take with if it succeeds, funding becomes reachable for the organization due to the changing its position. Adverse scenario follows with designing activities over organization which regret to take side with the state toward marginalization (Interviewee 1, 2019).

As it is seen that providing opportunities by state-led direction and categorization is seen as the biggest threat to the civil society in Turkey. Following the statement, financial issue and funding is perceived as another challenge for the civil societies, which is explained more detailed as:

economic issues are the most challenging ones. Due to the insufficiency of voluntary personal supports to conduct professionalism in civil society, employing professional staff within the body of the organization is become necessary. In connection with voluntarism, low-level level public support to civil society is considered a problem (Interviewee 2, 2019).

Financial difficulty is not seen only limited to the scarcity of the funds but also public view, which is affected by political directions. Regarding to financial sources of Mazlumder:

Our financial situation does not change because fees are the only financial sources. Indeed, we partly face with a decrease in financial supports in terms of diminishing public support from a religious or conservative society. People have not wanted to hear injustices or wrongs, which constitutes our field of activity done by the government who are from the same community. This situation caused Mazlumder to be seen as an opponent and decreasing support from the Muslim community due to criticizing another Muslim who is in power. Because Mazlumder's task is hard to explain themselves to people sharing with the similar life-view and realizing their activity right now in comparison to the past (Interviewee 2, 2019).

A common point underlined by all of the interviewees is that to have an independent agenda or activity, the financial source should be created through domestic facilities such as regular member payments and volunteer aids rather than state or international funds. Civility and autonomy of an organization depends on the economic freedom of organization. Because they believe that funding has a binding effect over organizations such as expecting specific or a particular requirement by the source of the fund. In addition to this argument, it is stated that

Increasing financial sources resulted in decreasing volunteerism in civil society activities, and Islamist organizations have also experienced this situation (Interviewee 1, 2019).

I argue that the reason behind this fact is highly associated with the political culture, which consists of having a lack of collective action, the unwillingness of people for voluntary support to civil society, and being unconscious about active citizenship. Especially participating in rights-based civil society has empowered the development of active citizenship (Çakmaklı, 2017).

In specific to financial sources of Mazlumder, all interviewees stated that although they have come across with financial difficulties for covering institutional expenses, realizing activities, and attending global events. But we have consistent funding policy on regretting external funds, including state and international organizations, in the name of preserving freedom. Funding as one of the challenging factors for the Mazlumder as the same as other civil society organizations has a determinative role over the scope of activities and employing professional

stuff in the administrative body. Although funding is crucial for maintaining activities, it has very sensitive on that institutional freedom, which is perceived highly associated with the source of finance in the eyes of the organization.

Civil society- state relations and lack of democracy is seen as another critical problem that civil society came across with (Çaha, 1999). In the same line with this argument, the relation between Islamist civil society organizations and state caused similar problems which are stated as:

Civil society has a problem with itself because actors have preferred to engage political positions within the state by encouraging youths to be employed in these positions. They should support youth for intellectual production within civil society; however, current situation brought about uniting reflections of civil society and state (Interviewee 3, 2019).

Close relations of some Islamist civil society organizations with the state resulted in a state-dependent type of relationship which is criticized in terms of losing civic nature and intellectual activities. As it is stated in the theory chapter, according to the prevailing liberal view, civil society and state relations indicator of the level of democracy. In this regard, the status of democracy is seen as a problem that civil society faces with these statements.

Due to the lack of mature democracy in a political institution, civil society is supposed to be in the same line with the political power, in other words, civil society should adopt a view or path as to how political authority prefers. This situation is not applied only to the current period but also the same in previous terms with the same state-directive character. In the case of Islamist CSOs, he has criticized the lack of discussion on what makes things as Islamic, according to which criteria. As a result, this term is perceived and used as a legacy from father to son, which created an environment that tended to impose its understanding of Islam and clash with others rather than struggling with this situation (Interviewee 3, 2019).

To sum up, arguments stated by the board members of Mazlumder Istanbul regarding the most significant difficulty facing civil society can be linked with the directive role of state over the organizations, including also Islamists. They have stated that traditional state-centered characteristic of civil society has not changed even political and economic transformations happened.

#### **Civil Society-State Relations: the case of Mazlumder**

Views on state-civil society relations take a severe place of theoretical discussion as it is stated in the first chapter. Here, I have posed questions to understand the view of Mazlumder in terms

of the civil society-state relationship during the AK PARTY governance, the interpretation of state-civil society relations, the position of Mazlumder in this relation, and lastly Mazlumder's relationship with political society.

Each of the four interviewees has approached state-civil society relations in general with an idealistic view, in another meaning they have shared their thoughts on how it ought to be. My analysis from the interview shows that they have adopted a liberal view regarding the relationship between state and civil society even though they don't consider the application of the Western world as ideal. Because they have mentioned the role of control mechanism over the state, independency of civils society that can be seen from statements below:

State can be considered as one of the innocuous rivals against the civil society organizations within the functioning democratic system because possible state responses can be dealt with legal structure by the organizations (interviewee 1, 2019).

CSOs should have controlling mechanisms over what the state is doing, for instance, whether the governments are working within the current legal framework or not. Their activities should include advisory structure; however, this ideal articulation does not reflect the reality of Turkey but also the rest of the world, the capital owners have wanted to take CSO under control through funding mechanism (Interviewee 2, 2019).

In the condition that the state or any other actor does not direct civil society, it can do many things that the state cannot do. Therefore, CSOs cannot act properly enough due to the immature democratic system (interviewee 3, 2019).

In this statement, ideal civil society is portrayed concerning liberal view; however, current features of the civil society correspond with the Marxist thought on civil society (Savran, 2003). Funding and owners' interest are seen as primary decisive mechanisms over the civil society; therefore, independence is not realistic articulation of contemporary civil society.

They have commonly supported the necessity of autonomy of civil society in front of the state; therefore, it can work functionally. But this ideal expectation is not experienced in Turkey in the past, and now and this situation is highly associated with the democratic deficit of the country (Aydın-Düzgit, 2012).

After conveying CSO -State relationship in general, thoughts on the status of bilateral relations during the AK PARTY period will be transmitted. The common idea of four interviewees about the issue is that you versus us or national/traitor based social and political categorization has emerged, especially the last period of the AK PARTY government. By taking reference naming over groups or organizations, classification becomes legitimate. Therefore, pro-government



and opposition groups have different conditions and opportunities, but this is not only happened in this period, but also it has existed since yesterday in Turkish politics. Each government tends to have close relations with groups sharing similar views and supporting the government's power. As an additional statement above, further arguments will be transmitted as follows.

Although AK PARTY came to power with civic initiative against the settled state order, the AK PARTY period as one of the currents represents of Turkish political culture. AK PARTY created a new specific type of official ideology; thus, views outside defined ideology are faced with psychological judgment. For instance, making politics over traitor-national categorization comes from this understanding and leads to social and political polarization (Interviewee 1, 2019).

Turkey has experienced a period until 2014, which serious rights and freedom peaked, and people from any movement and group have expressed themselves freely. But over time, the situation started to turn in adverse, especially after 15 July 2016. As we have witnesses that the CSOs, which are not related to FETÖ, were closed because of their stance. Therefore, all CSOs are under psychological pressure, which is a kind of re-experiencing of memories of Turkey (Interviewee 4, 2019).

Separation between pro-government and opponents has accelerated. The first group is free to express themselves and make activities due to acceptance as national. On the contrary, an organization from another camp can easily be labeled as opposition...Islamist CSOs have benefited from the conservative AK PARTY government while other Kurdish, Armenian, secular, Alevi, and even some Islamist organizations could not get the same opportunity. Due to the unjust distribution of opportunities within civil society, Mazlumder, as one of the Islamists CSO within the same community, does not approve of this situation... Islamist groups felt more comfortable with coming to AK PARTY into power and tented passing the buck to the government. They have thought that their responsibilities and duties toward society become easier because of having friends in power who can share their responsibility, which opened the way for being a free rider. Therefore, when power became director of activities, organizations could not say that wrongs of the authority were wrong due to the interest-based or affiliation-based bond between them (Interviewee 3, 2019).

It can be briefly said that CSOs and state relations during the AK PARTY period. However, Turkey has taken progress on democratization, especially the first two periods of AK PARTY governance through expanding freedoms and rights later, this favorable situation turned in adverse (Yılmaz, 2016). I argue that, especially after 15 July 2016, within the security measures, the categorization-based approach became evident toward groups in civil society and politics.

While some groups named as national, patriot others accused of being traitor, which was not limited only naming also, public opinion is also affected by this categorization.

Regarding Mazlumder's relationship with the state, it is argued by the member of the association; it has not any organic contact with any government, political societies, and state institution. However, interaction occurs when actions of state binds the Mazlumder in terms of the case of the human rights. Moreover, it has situated neither pro-government nor opposition because an organization dealing with human rights should not take certain positions; otherwise, it cannot create an issue freely, which is taken very seriously by the association.

Different from having an organic link with stated bodies, due to the working on rights and freedoms, interaction with state institutions happens naturally in several ways:

If political authorities appreciate our jobs and willing to deal with injustices or abuses of rights that we have reported to state institutions, this becomes an opportunity. Otherwise, when revealed issue clashes with the interest of the government or other political parties, the issue becomes ignored (Interviewee 1, 2019).

As they have stated that, Mazlumder is favorable to make contact with the state for dealing with the problems through bureaucracy:

Having contact with the formal and bureaucratic staff is important for solving human rights problems. If any response does not come from these authorities, Mazlumder prefers to publicize issues to people. Therefore, we will be abdicating responsibility regarding the stated problem (Interviewee 3, 2019).

On the other hand, change in the field of activity of Mazlumder can be considered as one of the most crucial issues in terms of making inference about the impact of AK PARTY and its policies over the Islamist CSOs.

As it is stated before, Mazlumder, as a human rights association, has witnessed a period corresponding golden period of AK PARTY with a minimum level of human rights abuses and torture. Because some CSOs are facing the state's otherization, Mazlumder has also become uneasy. It had massive support from religious people and civil society, especially in post-28 February and pre-AK PARTY periods, which made leading organizations defending the rights of religious people. After AK PARTY came to power, some Islamist CSOs have put a distance with Mazlumder because of the close relationship between the government and them and also their pro-government position. Mazlumder vocalizes the injustices and human rights violations done by the state with which is located in the opposing camp with the government by the other CSOs, which is not the case indeed as members have stated before (Interviewee 4, 2019).

Apart from comments and evaluations regarding changes in the activity space of Mazlumder, some other mental and discursive transformations of religious people and Islamists in last years with these statements:

For instance, the existence of the Higher Education Council (YÖK) was not supported and approved in the name of defending freedom and autonomy of universities by the religious-oriented people and CSO before the AK PARTY government. As how previous governments did, the current conservative government has also preferred to use YÖK for designing political life in universities. There has no criticism or response raised from Islamic CSO toward this conjunctural change, which shows people have lost their sensibilities when their friends come to power and mentally transformed. However, today, Mazlumder remains its stance and idea over the issue (Interviewee 4,2019).

### **Democracy and Civil Society Relations**

I have asked members of the Mazlumder about their opinions about the definition of democracy, its relationship with the civil society, and the evaluation of democratization in terms of the condition of Islamist civil society organizations. They have defined democracy and its relationship with civil society according to their opinion. The first interviewee had a very critical approach toward the current status of democracies rather than its ideal definition. His main criticism against the democracy is as follows:

Definition is missing from unseen actors who are out of the definition but very influential over the system, such as capitals, media, oil, pharmaceutical industry cartels. Although they have a determinative role over the system, they are not visible in daily life since concerning capital and interests as associated with the level of the state's welfare. For instance, the transformative role of media and capital is not noticed in societies. On the contrary, in the underdeveloped democracies, civility face with limitation when their activities intersect with the interest of one of the cartels. In the contemporary world, any independent world-range civil society cannot stand against the leading cartels (Interviewee 1,2019).

As it is seen that he is very critical on the idea of autonomous civil society within a functioning democratic system because of interest seeking domestic and international cartel groups and their influence over the system. Therefore, democracy needs advancements and updating to cope with balance problems, which is resulted in excessive intervention by unseen actors within the system.

Other members have focused on certain features of democracy rather than making concrete definitions. They have underlined requirements such as judicial independence, freedom of

thought and expression, lack of interference, and suppression of majority over minority, social tolerance, and balance of power.

In the wake of indicating views about democracy, evaluations over measuring the level of democracy for CSOs with also examples from religiously motivated ones will be stated as follows. A common point from their explanation is how democratic civil society is equivalent to a democratic level of a country. Functioning democracy depends on the democratic culture of society and public demands for autonomous civil society cause (Almond & Verba, 1963). Democratic culture has also bound the domestic affairs of an association, which is directly linked with the general status of civil society in the country.

Life- long government habitat within an organizational structure is seen as one of the forerunner problems causing a democratic deficit in CSOs. Especially in the cemaat or religious groups-based organizations, words of religious leaders have priority than the official manager of the organization, which harms the democratic mechanism within the organization. In this regard, Mazlumder is shown as a good example with its democratic management mechanism by the members due to the lack of leader- centric structure and regular elections for the board of directors. However, CSOs do not perform well in Turkey in this respect (Interviewee 2, 2019).

When changes in the democratic level of CSO over the years are asked to interviewees, they have commonly said that except for the first ten years of the AK PARTY period, there is no significant change in general because of political power remains its determinative role over the CSOs. Therefore, CSOs were seen as insufficient in terms of contributing the democracy with this statement:

CSOs do not contribute democracy enough due to the manner of both government and CSO leaders. Most people holding governor position in CSOs consider their positions as a means of advertising themselves and step for reaching higher positions, which limits contributions of CSO to democracy and society (Interviewee 4, 2019).

In specific to evaluations on the increasing scope of activities of Islamist CSOs in terms of democratization, they all have positive ideas. Opening space for Islamist CSOs and widening their actions as well as becoming more active in other minority-based groups contribute to fostering democracy, which makes society more tolerant toward differences.

### **Effect of the EU over Civil Society in Specific to Islamist CSOs**

As seen in the previous chapter, the EU negotiation process leads to former changes and transformation as an external factor. Even if literature has proven the positive impact of the EU

over the civil society, there is a need to ask members of Mazlumder about their opinions regarding the EU's effect on civil society. This is valuable because their views can be considered as a means to have an idea regarding organization from field and Islamic- oriented CSOs. General idea about the influence of the EU negotiation process the civil society is positive. Especially with the comprehensive legal change in 2004, many social gains were derived. In the case regulation of conditions, it is stated that:

Although torture is used as a systematic method in prisons by the state, it became almost impossible to apply as a result of constitutional change in 2004. So, we, as a human right association, had a hard time finding torture cases to react. However, these positive developments began to be withdrawn as the hope for joining the EU disappeared (Interviewee 1, 2019).

They have different approaches toward the effects of the EU negotiation process over Islamist CSOs. While it is seen as favorable in terms of the charity organization, on the other hand, funding issue seen as problematic:

It made a positive impact, especially for the charity or humanitarian relief organizations, interested in refugees in Syria, by having an international partner. Therefore, they get a chance to widen their activity space by getting support via EU funding in the region...Islamist groups have experienced discursive transformation in contrast to the previous period (Interviewee 1, 2019).

This process did not affect Islamic works, rather provided a financial facility for the projects through state institutions, which made Islamist CSOs and state as a partner and empowered state-lead civil society (Interviewee 2, 2019).

In the case of the last statement regarding funding issue is actually about the state's manner toward CSOs rather than directly EU's effect because responsibility belongs to the state after they have received funds for supporting projects of civil society organizations.

The results of the interviews with Mazlumder representatives show that; Civil society and in specific to Islamist civil society have come across financial and social challenges. Sometimes economic difficulties are resulted by social and political situations. Personal financial support to civil society organizations or institutional funding may link with the social position of the related association or foundation. It is commonly argued that social and political polarization, which fostered by politicians especially after the 15 July failed coup attempt in line with the increased security measures of government, lead to decrease public voluntarism in terms of human and financial resources public voluntarism.

Regarding civil society-state relations, although positive developments were recorded in terms of providing a diversity of actors, autonomy to the civil environment, the state maintains its decisive role softly or dominantly over civil society. Especially for some prevailing civil society organizations function as civic representatives of political authorities. Thus so, they have benefited psychical and social opportunities more than other neutral or opponent Islamist organizations. However, Mazlumder, as an Islamist civil society with its considerable history, they have not got extra financial and social opportunities. In contrast, they have faced difficulties by the religious and pro-government segments of society due to publicizing human rights violations made by the state. Their regular activities were perceived as being opposed to the government, which lead to decrease public audiences in comparison to the past.

The overall picture of the status of civil society and state relations is directly linked with the democratic level of the country. As members have explained that the democratic deficit of Turkey brings about not the born of autonomous civil society. And in the case of Islamist CSOs, although they have gained favorable developments by increasing number, activity, and funding, these opportunities were not felt by all of the organizations. Therefore, the traditional state-dominated character of civil society did not change In Turkey.

## CHAPTER 6- CONCLUSION

This study provides analysis regarding the effects of the democratization process over the Islamist civil society organizations within the AK PARTY period by exploring one of the Islamic-oriented civil society organizations Mazlumder under the changing dynamics of democracy and civil society and state relations. The research question is that how does Mazlumder define their activity space with widening Islamist civil society organizations and consider the effects of democratization over NGOs. I have interviewed four members of the board from Mazlumder Istanbul and posed several questions to understand their opinion and experiences on state-civil society relations, democratization of civil society, effects of the EU process over the civil society throughout the AK PARTY government.

I have decided to work on this issue because Islamist civil society organizations have become much in quantity and visible, especially after AK PARTY comes to power. In the literature, it is perceived that the emergence of new actors in the arena of civil society is a signal for increasing the level of democracy. In parallel to the stated argument, rising of Islamist civil society is considered as the democratization of civil society. Because Islamist organizations have not recognized by social and official actors before, they have bitter experiences in terms of acceptance as a social actor both in the official and social arena. However, when its approached from the state-civil society relations gap occurs in related literature, although there many studies in the field of state-civil society relations in general, the literature on Islamist civil society organizations is missing. As different from already existing approaches, this study unique for attempting to ask views and comments of one of the Islamist civil society organizations, Mazlumder, about the status of Islamist civil society organizations in general. I believe that this study contributes to CSO-state relations literature by adding a new dimension and actor who is Islamist CSO.

I have used a qualitative research method. Specifically, face to face in-depth interview was used for collecting data on views of members from Istanbul Branch of Mazlumder.

Emergence of Islamic oriented civil society organizations go back to the 1950s, but, especially after the 1980s, they have become visible. They have gained a speed under the AK PARTY period as parallel to their sustainable political power. Groups and organizations have got a chance to overcome adverse psychological and material effects of the 28 February Process,

which has left an impression intensely over the religious segment of the population through retaking power by conservative democrat party. Islamist and conservative groups have started to take a share more within the social sphere as compared to previous decades of Turkey both in terms of numbers and scope of fields. Some of these organizations have developed close relations with the state and institutions and sometimes worked as a partner in several projects. They have become non-negligible shareholders in the civil society. Islamist civil society organizations always have had rivalry relations with the state until the 2000s. Afterward, the overall picture has started to change toward a more friendly and collaborative type of relationship, especially after AK PARTY comes to power. However, this favorable situation has not the case for all Islamist civil society organizations. While some of them have benefited from psychical and social opportunities, others may be experienced the opposition case or may not be influenced. The main decisive criteria are the relationship between the state and civil society organizations.

To support these arguments, I will mention the explanations of representatives from Mazlumder. Firstly, state-led distribution of opportunities and categorization between civil society is perceived as challenges. In addition to these, the funding issue was linked with the social position of the organization. For instance, funds become reachable for the organization that they have not taken a side against the state. On the other hand, organizations with neutral or opponent stance could not reach state funds or cooperate with the state. The funding issue has one another dynamic which is linked with the public voluntarism. As it is stated during the interview, Mazlumder has faced with decreasing financial support of the public due to accusing of being state opponent. People are not happy to hear human right violations publicized by the Mazlumder because they have both religious sensitivities; therefore, violations or wrong applications of government was supposed to be underestimated by even human right organization. Otherwise, this leads to lose its credibility in the eyes of a religious audience. In the case of Mazlumder, they stated that their financial status was not affected because primary sources are fees of the members and personal aids. They regret to work with official and international funds in the name of preserving freedom of the association.

Views on state-civil society relations, in recent times, especially after the 15 July failed coup attempt, civil society was influenced by political polarization. Due to camps were created by giving reference to national security and survival of the state also supporting with the religious discourses, organizations feel obliged to choose one of the camps not to become alone. The



government's manner of acting differently to organizations from non-favorable camps was criticized as one of the members of the association. This manner is seen as equal to the manner of secular governments against the religious people. Especially Islamist civil society organizations mostly have preferred to take sides with the state. Then, it becomes hard to state something in a clash with the government. Thus, grift and state-dependent type or relation has occurred naturally. In the case of Mazlumder, as they have indicated that they have decisive on keeping distance between political actors. They have only made contact with the political authorities or state institutions to inform them about injustices or human rights violations. If these authorities ignore the Mazlumder's call, they have chosen to announce the issue to the public. In addition to statements, one of the members has stressed the mental transformation of religious people toward the formerly criticized aspects such as YÖK (Higher Education Council). They were supporting the idea of independence of universities, and therefore, they were against the YÖK. But today, this argument was not raised by any religious, social group and considered no longer a problem with the change of the government.

Regarding democracy and civil society relations, the definition of democracy was not seen comprehensive due to the excluding some actors such as; business cartels and capitals who are very decisive over the civil society. Without realizing the power of these actors, believing in the autonomy of civil society has not made sense for one of the members of Mazlumder. By taking this argument as a reference, the current case of civil society is taken into hand from a critical approach. Traditional state-led characteristics of civil society have resulted in the democratic deficit and political culture of the country. Unless democratic level increases, general problems cannot be solved completely, only actors can replace with each other.

On the other hand, members of Mazlumder have expressed their positive views on the effects of the EU over the democratization of civil society in Turkey. Especially in the first term of AK PARTY, serious legal change was made with the motivation of having accepted as a full candidate to the EU. However, by the time passes, positive developments began to disengage as the hope for joining the EU disappeared.

To sum up, related literature and results of the interview show that although rising and widening Islamist civil society is considered as the democratization of civil society, state-led character of civil society has not changed in Turkey. Because states always tended to open spaces for civil society organizations that they have a common agenda or outlook. On the other hand, other organizations that they do not any political or social link with the state may not feel

comfortable and act freely as much as others. By taking these arguments as a reference, the hypothesis is that actor-based transformation has happened in terms of state-civil society relations. However, it does not mean this transformation leads to democratization.

This study has some limitations. Firstly, interviewing with four people from the association set bounds to the generalization of inferences to whole Islamist CSOs. I have aimed to get informed Mazlumder's institutional stance, experience, and views regarding state-Islamist civil society relations in terms of democratization by asking related questions to four members of the board from Istanbul Mazlumder, in another name Head office of the association. Although interviewees put effort to make explanations in Mazlumder's eyes, their personal views influence their approach toward questions. One other point is that Istanbul Mazlumder, as the head office, represents the whole branches of the association. Still, there may be some people from other perspectives in other cities to make different explanations over the issue. Because of limited time and financial sources, I could not meet more people from other branches of Mazlumder. Therefore, these limitations should be taken into consideration while evaluating the results of the study.

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