

LIBERAL DISCOURSE AND POLICIES IN AK PARTY GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS: 2002-2015 PERIOD¹

AK PARTİ HÜKÜMET PROGRAMLARINDA LİBERAL SÖYLEM VE POLİTİKALAR: 2002- 2015 DÖNEMİ

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Abstract

Turkey was governed by a parliamentary government system from the enactment of the 1876 Constitution until the elections of 24 June 2018 (except for the 1921 Constitution, which corresponds to a very short period). In parliamentary systems of government, the prime minister, who heads the government, is a member of the legislature and is the person charged with forming the government. The Prime Minister usually prepares or has a government program prepared in order to fulfill his mandate to form the government. If this government program can get a vote of confidence from the legislature, the government is formally formed. In this process, which expressed the formula of forming a government in Turkey until recently, the government programs presented by the prime ministers to the legislature are of great importance. Because the government programs submitted to a vote of confidence are a kind of compass of the governments and it is expected that policies will be developed in accordance with the principles and promises set forth in the aforementioned program during the term of office. The four government programs (The prime minister of the first government is Abdullah Gul. In the other three governments, the prime minister is Recep Tayyip Erdogan) aiming at realizing various reforms, expanding fundamental rights and freedoms, and reaching the criteria of the European Union, especially in the first years of the AK Party, which has been in power in Turkey since November 3, 2002, It draws attention in terms of giving place to discourse and policies. This study aims to reveal the traces of liberal ideology in the claims, policies and discourses of the first four government programs of the AK Party. During the aforementioned periods, the AK Party persistently defined itself as a political party with a conservative democratic identity. However, in this study, a document analysis of Ak Party's government programs was made. Document analysis includes the analysis of written materials containing information about a researched subject or phenomenon. As a result of the document analysis, it has been seen that the Ak Party has a program closer to the liberal democratic political tradition than to the conservative identity. Therefore, the argument of the study is that the dominant perspective in Ak Party government programs between 2002 and 2015 includes liberal democratic values.

Keywords: Ak Party, Government Programs, Liberalism.

Öz

Türkiye, 1876 Anayasası'nın kabulünden 24 Haziran 2018 seçimlerine kadar geçen sürede (çok kısa bir döneme tekabül eden 1921 Anayasası hariç) parlamenter hükümet sistemiyle yönetilmiştir. Parlamenter hükümet sistemlerinde hükümetin başında bulunan başbakan, yasama organının üyesidir ve hükümeti kurmakla görevli kişidir. Başbakan, hükümeti kurma görevini yerine getirebilmek için genellikle bir hükümet programı hazırlar ya da hazırlatır. Bu hükümet programı ise yasama organından güvenoyu alabilirse hükümet resmen kurulur. Yakın tarihe kadar Türkiye'de hükümet kurmanın formülünü ifade eden bu süreçte, başbakanların yasama organına sunduğu hükümet programları büyük önem taşır. Zira güvenoyuna sunulan hükümet programları, hükümetlerin bir tür pusulasıdır ve görev süresince bahsi geçen programda ortaya konan ilke ve vaatlere uygun politikalar geliştirilmesi beklenilir. Türkiye'de 3 Kasım 2002 tarihinden beri iktidar olan Ak Parti'nin özellikle ilk yıllarında çeşitli reformların gerçekleştirilmesini, temel hak ve özgürlüklerin genişletilmesini, Avrupa Birliği kriterlerine ulaşılmasını hedefleyen ilk dört hükümet programı (Abdullah Gül Hükümeti, I., II. ve III. Recep Tayyip

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Erdoğan Hükümeti), liberal söylem ve politikalara yer vermesi bakımından dikkat çekmektedir. Bu çalışma, Ak Parti'nin ilk dört hükümet programının ortaya koyduğu iddia, politika ve söylemlerde liberalizm ideolojisinin izlerini ortaya çıkarmayı amaçlamaktadır. Bahsi geçen dönemde kendisini muhafazakâr demokrat olarak tanımlayan ve hükümet programlarında da muhafazakâr demokrat kimliğe sıklıkla vurgu yapan Ak Parti'nin o dönemde liberal demokrat kimliğe daha yakın olduğu bu çalışmanın temel argümanını oluşturmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Ak Parti, Hükümet Programları, Liberalizm.

Introduction

Politics is one of the most basic human activities and occupations. The political institution that decides who will have power and authority and how values will be distributed is built on the concept of political power (Ertugay, 2016: 37). Therefore, politics is the source of all conflicts. In addition to this, politics is also considered as a tool to resolve all conflicts.

Politics is a set of activities that make, protect or change the general rules that regulate people's lives (Heywood, 2013: 22). Thanks to politics, it is desirable that different views or conflicts in the society come to an agreement and come together in a common. Policies that governments or public institutions promise to do or not to do can widen or narrow the policy area of reconciliation or conflict. Political power should consider fundamental rights and freedoms while planning and implementing public policies. Fundamental rights and freedoms should not be harmed in any way in the construction of public policies. Political powers should integrate their own interests with the interests of the people in the process of presenting public policy. The political power should act with a discourse and vision that can satisfy even those who oppose it. This is an idealized perspective for politics. In case of approaching the mentioned ideal in parliamentary democracies, the legitimacy of political power will expand. Therefore, the preparation of government programs with an inclusive and libertarian perspective in parliamentary systems will satisfy individuals and groups with different ideas, including the opposition. Thus, it will be possible to strengthen democratic traditions.

Turkey has a long history of parliamentary democracy. The parliamentary democracy tradition of the Ottoman Empire, which passed from autocracy to a constitutional monarchy with the constitution adopted on 23 December 1876, spread to the Republic of Turkey. The programs of governments have always had an important place in Turkey, which strengthened the parliamentary democracy tradition with the 1876, 1924 (except for the 1921 Constitution) and finally 1982 Constitutions, respectively. Because government programs are a kind of vision document that covers the principles on which governments will govern the country and what public policies they will implement during their term of office. Before the transition to the

presidential system, Turkey was governed by a parliamentary government system. In parliamentary systems of government, the government had to receive a vote of confidence from the legislature. The cabinet established by the Prime Minister sought authorization from the parliamentarians with a government program that included the principles and claims of governing the country. If he received the vote of confidence, the government could take office. In this process, the contents of government programs and the principles on which they are based are a matter of examination in terms of political science.

This study aims to examine the government programs in 2002-2015 when the AK Party (Justice and Development Party/ Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi) was in power. Government programs in the post-2015 period were not included in the study. Because in the next period, Turkey switched to a semi-presidential government system. With the constitutional amendment referendum in 2017, Turkey switched to a kind of presidential system called the *Presidential Government System (Cumhurbaşkanlığı Hükümet Sistemi)*. In addition, the post-2015 period needs to be examined in detail in another study. In this period, the AK Party lost too many votes to form a government. When the AK Party held the power to form a government in the elections on 1 November 2015, the President had a significant influence on the government. Therefore, the period of 2015 and beyond was not included in the study. The mentioned period should be examined in detail for another study. The main argument of this study is that liberal discourse and policies are frequently referenced in the government programs of the AK Party, which has been claimed to have a conservative identity by its voters or party administrators since the day it was founded. Before mentioning that the liberal discourse and policies of the AK Party are frequently included, a conceptual framework on liberalism is presented. In the continuation of the study, the political identity of the AK Party is mentioned. And finally, the government programs between 2002 and 2015, when the AK Party was in power, were examined. It has been claimed that the principles in these government programs were prepared with a liberal rather than a conservative perspective.

In the study, firstly concepts such as conservatism, conservative democracy, liberalism and liberal democracy are explained. Thus, the background of ideological debates has been made more understandable for the reader. Afterwards, an evaluation on the political identity of the AK Party is given. In the last part of the study, document analysis of Ak Party government programs was made. The analyzes have revealed how close the AK Party's discourse is to liberal democratic discourses and liberalism ideology.

1. Conservative Ideology and Conservative Democracy Concept

The concept of conservatism, which derives from the Latin words "conservare" and "conservatismus", means to preserve or preserve as it is. Conservatives oppose the idea of the French revolution, modernization and enlightenment in Europe (Çetin, 2007: 2019). Because they regard traditions as a kind of heritage from history as sacred.

According to some, conservatism is considered as maintaining and defending the dominant order and structure. Others define conservatism as longing for the old structure, the ancient regime, and the order. According to them, conservatives fear any idea of innovation (Yılmaz, 2016: 115). They believe that it is important to gain strength from the deep-rooted experiences of the past and they see the continuity of the dominant order that has existed since the past as legitimate.

The most important principle of conservatism ideology is order and stability. The rapid changes at the social and political level that took place with the French Revolution frightened the conservatives. According to conservatives, the change experienced with the French Revolution caused the deterioration of society, traditions and traditional institutions. Thus, the conservatives, who believed that the political stability had deteriorated, saw the radical innovations that took place in a short time as the biggest culprit for this. Conservatism sees the rapid realization of radical changes as objectionable. Therefore, the thought of conservatism is often subject to a pejorative definition. In addition, conservatism is associated with concepts such as reactionism and conservatism (Akıncı, 2012: 46).

According to Layton-Henry (1982: 1), conservatism is used as a term describing sets of political ideas, a particular tradition in the history of political thought emanating from the reaction to the ideas of the Enlightenment and the events of the French Revolution and associated particularly with the writings of Edmund Burke. Conservatism, based on E. Burke, argues that every human being is a product of history, tradition, culture, religion or a race. Conservatism accepts all these elements as concrete data. Therefore, it rejects the abstract ideas brought by the enlightenment ideas such as freedom, equality and justice. Based on these principles, Akdoğan (2003: 6-12) explains the parameters of the ideology of conservatism as follows:

- Conservatism advocates evolutionist and gradual development against revolutionary transformation.
- Conservatism sees politics as an area of consensus.
- According to conservatism, political authority is built on social will and values.

- Political power should not be monopolized by a certain group.
- The rule of law approach is adopted and dogmatism is avoided.
- Protecting the family is essential.
- Moderation is preferred over radicalism.
- Social engineering is opposed.

The ideology of conservatism celebrates tradition and the ancient regime, which it assumes to be the product of tradition. Thus, a tension has arisen between democracy and conservatism. Especially in the post-Cold War years, the strengthening of liberal democracy to carry the claim of the end of history paved the way for the conservatism ideology to reconcile with democracy. Because conservatives understood the importance of democracy and decided to combine conservatism and democracy. As a result, a "conservative democrat" approach has emerged that does not radically reject change, adheres to traditions, considers fundamental rights and freedoms essential, and does not reject abstract concepts such as freedom and equality without prejudice. Although some equate the conservative democratic approach with liberalism, there are aspects that differ from the ideology of liberalism. Because conservatives see strong state and harsh sanctions as essential in order to achieve the ideal of a well-functioning society (Özipek, 2004: 54). Therefore, in the next part of the study, a detailed perspective on the ideology of liberalism and its basic principles is presented.

2. A Conceptual Framework for Liberalism and Liberal Policies

Liberalism has inspired many movements in Europe and countries influenced by European culture in the last four hundred years. The influence of liberalism on politics in Western countries lasted for many years. Therefore, it is not possible to define liberalism independently of Western culture (Miller et al., 1991: 70). Liberal ideas emerged as a result of the collapse of feudalism in Europe and a burgeoning market or capitalist society in its place. Liberal ideas were radical even for that period. These ideas demanded some fundamental reforms and sometimes even revolutionary changes. The English Revolution of the 17th century and the American and French Revolutions of the late 18th century contained easily recognizable liberal elements during this period. Liberals of this period challenged absolute monarchies. Instead of absolutism, they advocated constitutional and later representative democracy. In addition, liberals defended the freedom of religion and conscience and questioned the authority of the church (Heywood, 2017: 55). Early liberals challenged arbitrary power by appealing to universal principles. They believe that individuals have innate capacities to manage their economic, religious and other affairs. According to the first liberals, individuals have

inalienable natural rights (Eccleshall, 2003: 26). Liberal ideas are built on the existence of natural rights, the freedom of the individual, and the idea of the limitation of political power.

Liberalism continues to exist as a holistic political system today, passing through the filter of historical accumulation and conflicts. The claim of liberalism covers a wide spectrum from human to state, from social organizations to economic relations. In this respect, liberalism claims to be universal (Çetin, 2007: 25). Although there are different factions, liberalism as an ideology has some basic principles. Liberalism, which is based on principles such as freedom, individualism, constitutional and limited state, market economy, minimal state, private property, rule of law, spontaneous order and tolerance, negates all kinds of authoritarian and totalitarian regimes. Liberals consider democracy among the supreme political values.

According to liberals, the state is a useful invention for humanity. The state is responsible for preserving social rules rather than creating them. According to David Hume, the state is an organization invented to reduce violence between people. However, interestingly, there is violence at the core of the state. All liberals find the state necessary. However, they agree on the limitation of the state. For liberals, the state is a necessary evil that is needed. So the state should be minimal. As long as it stays within reasonable and legitimate limits, the state can benefit people. However, the state, whose powers and responsibilities expand, harms the rights and freedoms of people (Yayla, 2019: 79). Liberalism, on the other hand, aims to protect the individual from arbitrary external pressures that prevent him from realizing his own potential (Berktaş, 2014: 55). Therefore, the state must be so controlled and small that it cannot go beyond the borders drawn for it.

The ideology of liberalism lost its popularity around the world, especially after the 1929 Economic Depression. After this date, the planned economy period and political regimes in which the state had a more dominant role continued their existence until the 1970s. However, in the 1980s, economic, political and ideological structures began to change rapidly. Capital movements significantly reshaped the world economy in this period. The social state understanding has been replaced by neo-liberal and neo-conservative policies. In this process, on the one hand, communication systems and information technologies developed, on the other hand, the rise of international capital brought a new governance logic. Thus, a type of politics known as the new right has emerged (Duman, 2017: 189-190).

After the collapse of the Keynesian economic model, the understanding of the welfare state and left governments failed. Thus, the new right-wing politics began to rise across the world. In Turkey, the most important representative of right-wing politics, which attaches great

importance to liberal principles, especially in economic terms, was the Motherland Party (ANAP) led by Özal (Akalin, 2010: 470). ANAP, the representative of the new right-wing politics, which includes some conservative principles as well as economic and political liberalism, on the one hand, defended principles such as market economy, individual freedom and limited state. On the other hand, ancient conservative values such as family, authority, obedience, and the search for law and order based on traditions were among the foundations of ANAP. Özal's liberal-conservative political identity was inherited by the AK Party in the early 2000s. Although the party defines itself as a conservative democrat, it frequently emphasizes and implements liberal rhetoric and policies. Before talking about the liberal discourse and practices of the AK Party, it would be useful to mention its political identity.

3. The Political Identity of the AK Party

The political roots of the AK Party are based on the tradition of the National Order Party (MNP), the National Salvation Party (MSP), the Welfare Party (RP) and the Virtue Party (FP), founded by Necmettin Erbakan (Kurt et al., 2018: 69). Senior executive cadres of the party have struggled within the Islamist political tradition. As a matter of fact, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan assumed the duty of Istanbul provincial chairman of the Welfare Party and was elected as the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality Mayor from this party. Names such as Abdullah Gül and Bülent Arınç, who are among the other powerful names of the AK Party, also took part in the tradition of *Milli Gorus*² and formed the executive staff of the Welfare Party. After the 28 February (28 Şubat) period, the Virtue Party was established by the leaders of this party as a result of the RP's closure. In the Fazilet Party, which was founded after February 28, there was a split between the traditionalist group and the innovators, who did not want to experience a party shutdown again. The innovative group thought that on the one hand, the party could maintain its Islamic sensibility, and on the other hand, it could reach the electorate by trying new methods. The references of the innovators were based on inclusive and liberal policies such as human rights, demilitarization and pluralism. Also, innovators believed that the traditional paradigm of nationalism was not inclusive enough. The debates between the innovative group and the traditionalist group became more prominent at the 2000 congress of the Virtue Party.

²Milli Gorus (National Vision) Movement, Founded by Necmettin Erbakan (1926-2011), it emerged in Turkey in 1969 with an initiative known as the "Independent Movement". The Milli Gorus Movement adopted the political party/method in the Islamic struggle and presented the "Just Order" thesis as a new model and doctrine. The goal of Milli Gorus is a "political reformist" Islamic movement that has determined the ideals of "A Livable Turkey", "A Greater Turkey Again" and "A New World" (Tuğrul, 2019: 15).

The innovative group, which lost the elections in the congress, left the Virtue Party and founded the AK Party.

AK Party abandoned the tradition of *Milli Gorus* and tried to base itself on a democratic political legacy. For this reason, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has often used discourses stating that Adnan Menderes and Turgut Özal are trying to protect their historical political heritage. Thus, the AK Party claimed that it was in a political direction in line with the Democratic Party (Taylan, 2021: 63). In other words, Erdoğan represented the centre-right politics of Adnan Menderes and Turgut Özal and adopted conservative values (Akyol, 2003; Nebati, 2014: 208). On the other hand, the AK Party has included pioneering leaders from the National Vision tradition and politicians from the right-wing tradition. Thus, the AK Party tried to create a broad political perspective. He claimed that he brought together the identity of conservatism and democracy (Yıldırım, 2011: 63). And the AK Party frequently made references to the conservative democratic identity in its political discourse.

The discourses of the AK Party were generally based on the change of political power through democratic means without extra-systemic intervention. In addition, the AK Party considers it essential to secure fundamental rights and freedoms. These issues are also included in the text announced by the AK Party as the Urgent Action Plan: "All obstacles in front of fundamental rights and freedoms, from the electoral system to the law of political parties, from participation and transparency in the administration to the reform of local administrations, will be removed. Solutions will be presented to the main problem areas". It is seen that fundamental rights and freedoms and democratic values are heavily included in the discourses of the AK Party (Poyraz, 2019: 335).

Liberal principles are frequently emphasized in the party program, which can be considered as the founding document of the AK Party. The concept of freedom in the AK Party program is defined as follows. "No one is free unless everyone is free. This motto is counted among the most fundamental principles of the party. The individual is placed at the center of all policies in the AK Party program. However, it has been claimed that democratization can only be achieved with individualism. The principle of pluralism, one of the fundamental values of liberalism, is also included in the program of the AK Party (Party Programme of AK Parti).

AK Party has prepared a party program that emphasizes the concepts such as reconciliation, peace and dialogue instead of the contradictions of the National Vision tradition such as east-west, right-false, the order of others-just order. It has been seen that the AK Party is based on

universal values, rights and freedoms, rather than an ummatist or Islamist rhetoric. Although it introduces itself as a conservative democrat, it is seen that the AK Party has a close relationship with liberal values. However, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has always kept the conservative democratic identity at the forefront, despite the discourse and government programs based on liberal policies. Because in Turkey, the label of liberal has a negative meaning or the society does not have enough knowledge of the ideology of liberalism. The fact that the society is unfamiliar with the concept of liberal has been influential in the AK Party's use of the concepts of conservative and democrat instead. Thus, Ak Party aimed to settle in the center right by trying to show that it did not break with tradition. His conservative democrat identity was frequently emphasized by Erdogan, especially in the program of the I. Erdogan Government (TBMM Tutanak Dergisi, 18/03/2003: 119):

“AK Party defines its political identity as “conservative democrat”. Based on our own tradition of thought, the AK Party aims to reproduce our domestic and deep-rooted value system with a conservative policy line of universal standard. The presentation of the new “conservative democrat” line in accordance with the genes and historical codes of conservatism, but based on the social and cultural traditions of the geography in which we conduct politics, will bring a new breath to Turkish politics. Instead of borrowing a policy line from the past or a civilizational basin, the AK Party finds it right to reproduce a political attitude that has been tested throughout the world with its own tradition of thought.

According to our conservative democratic identity, which is the basis for our new understanding of politics, politics is an area of consensus. We accept the diversity and difference in the social field as well in the political field and invite the parties of politics to reconciliation on all grounds. For us, differences are a natural state and wealth. Social and cultural diversity should participate in politics as a color on the ground of tolerance and tolerance that democratic pluralism will produce. We accept the idea that participatory democracy will develop itself by providing representation to the differences and incorporating them into the political process”.

Although Erdogan's discourses contain a dominant conservatism, the presence of references to tolerance, cultural diversity, pluralism and even multiculturalism is remarkable. Concepts and policies based on the liberal perspective are presented in the next section, which is frequently mentioned in the Abdullah Gül and Erdoğan government programs of the AK Party.

4. Liberal Discourse and Policies of the AK Party in Government Programs

The AK Party defines itself as a conservative democratic political movement. Conservatism is an ideology that emerged in modern times, just like liberalism. The ideology of conservatism, which sees institutions such as family and religion as tools for the self-realization of the individual, essentially assigns a limited role to the state and politics. The point of view on the limitation of the state partially converges the ideology of conservatism with liberalism. However, the divergence points between these two ideologies are not few. Conservatism, sociologically, has criticized the new social conditions that emerged with the industrial revolution, eliminating old values (Yayla, 2003: 158). It is based on the society that takes its power from the traditions of the ancient past. Therefore, it recommends the preservation of social and political structures built in the historical process. In other words, it opposes the abolition of the social and political structures built by tradition and the past with a revolution and the establishment of a new one. Conservatives oppose liberal thinking based on the individual, acting as individuals are weak and deficient. The French Revolution, where liberalism is fed, sees the American and British Revolutions as threats. Because as a result of these revolutions, political power was limited and a new social and political order was established. Conservatives perceive the transition to a new order and abandoning the ancient institutions of the past as a threat. They reject liberal ideas that attach great importance to the human mind and see enlightenment as the source of freedom. According to conservatives, liberalism's understanding of freedom is not realistic, it is abstract. Conservative thinking is based on the preservation of concrete institutions built in tradition rather than abstract concepts.

As a philosophical thought and political attitude, conservatism believes that the current political, social and economic order should be preserved as much as possible. This order, the traditions and institutions created over the generations, has proven itself through the rigors of time and experience. In this sense, it is legitimate. Change should be slow and gradual. For conservatives, society is a slow and complex organism. As a result of the changes and trials experienced slowly over the centuries, society, social and political institutions have taken their present form (Güler, 2014: 117). According to conservatives, the social, political and economic structure in which the past was shaped should not be abruptly removed with the enthusiasm of making a revolution. In this respect, conservatives oppose any idea of revolution and wide-ranging change. Therefore, they criticize liberalism's libertarian revolutions that brought about great changes in history, the process of designing political institutions, and seeing democracy as a sacred value.

Although the I, II, III and IV Governments, in which the AK Party was in power alone, made reference to the conservative democratic identity, they frequently referred to liberal discourses and policies that did not coincide with the basic principles of conservatism. The concepts of pluralist democracy, human rights and reconciliation were frequently included in the program of the Abdullah Gül Government, which received a vote of confidence from the Grand National Assembly of Turkey between 18.11.2002 and 14.03.2003. (TBMM Tutanak Dergisi, 23/11/2002: 42):

“With a pluralist understanding of democracy, on the basis of respect for law and human rights, knowing that numerical superiority does not mean everything, we will exert maximum effort to build social consensus in important steps to be taken”.

The Gül Government, in its criticisms of previous periods, highlighted that Turkey could not adapt to the world sufficiently. The emphasis on the need for privatization in the government program is noteworthy. In the government program that criticizes the statist economy, market economy is presented as a solution:

“Due to the wrong policies implemented, the role of the state in the economy could not keep up with the changing conditions, justice could not be ensured in the distribution of wealth between social segments and regions, and a healthy privatization could not be realized. Our country could not get rid of the cumbersome and excessively centralized structure in public administration, corruption and political corruption”.

Libertarian discourse and promises were frequently included in the Program of the Gül Government. It was said that all civil and political freedoms would be guaranteed. It is aimed to establish an environment where people can continue their individual development away from fear and anxiety. The concept of freedom mentioned here is in accordance with the negative freedom principle of liberalism. In addition, the principles that liberalism often references, such as the right to property, freedom of thought and expression, were included in the program of the Gül Government. (TBMM Tutanak Dergisi, 23/11/2002: 44):

“It will rearrange the provisions limiting the right to property, freedom of thought, expression, belief, worship, enterprise and association, taking into account the understanding of universal law and freedom”.

It is seen that the Gül Government also included policies based on economic liberalism in the program. It was emphasized in the government program that privatizations would be accelerated and incentives would be made for domestic and foreign investments. It has often

been reiterated that the understanding of the market economy forms the basis of the economic promises in the Government program.

It has been discussed that the emphasis on conservatism was frequently referred to in the First Erdogan Government, which was established between 14.03.2003 and 29.08.2007 after the Gul Government. Although Erdoğan stated that the party has a conservative democratic identity, he often included democratic discourses (TBMM Tutanak Dergisi, 18/03/2003: 119-120):

“In our opinion, totalitarian and authoritarian understandings, which are unrestricted, allow arbitrariness and lawlessness, ignore participation and representation, and disregard individual and collective rights and freedoms, are the biggest enemies of civil and democratic politics. The AK Party government sees all kinds of imposing, commanding, uniform, social engineering approaches as obstacles for a healthy democratic system”.

Concepts such as market economy, promotion of competition, and financial liberalization were frequently included in the economic policies of the First Erdogan Government: “With financial liberalization, an environment that allows the market to determine the prices of financial products and services in a way that reflects domestic and foreign conditions will be created” (TBMM Tutanak Dergisi, 18/03/2003: 119-127). It has also been promised that Turkey will be made attractive for foreign investors, who are indispensable for the free market economy: “The entry of foreign direct investments will be provided, and the regulations will provide a suitable environment for domestic and foreign companies to compete on equal terms” (TBMM Tutanak Dergisi, 18/03/2003: 119-127).

One of the most interesting issues in the program of the Second Erdogan Government, which came to power between 29.08.2007-06.07.2011, is the absence of any reference to conservative identity. The majority of references to the European Union, the Copenhagen Criteria, and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in the government program draw attention (TBMM Tutanak Dergisi, 31/08/2007: 106-107):

“The new constitution should fully implement the principles of the democratic, secular and social state of law, which are the unalterable basic characteristics of our republic, protect the rights of individuals in the most effective way, and guarantee their fundamental rights and freedoms in accordance with the principles and standards brought by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the European Convention on Human

Rights. should be under. The new constitution should be prepared with the widest possible social consensus. Distinguished parliamentarians, the ultimate goal of democracy and the rule of law is to secure all fundamental rights and freedoms, and to ensure that people live in safety away from fear and anxiety. On fundamental rights and freedoms, the principles specified in the international conventions to which our country is a party will be applied, and full compliance with the Copenhagen political criteria will be ensured”.

Just like in the First Erdogan Government, the Second Erdogan Government also included the market economy, which is one of the basic principles of liberalism, and in parallel, the withdrawal of the state from the economic field (TBMM Tutanak Dergisi, 31/08/2007: 110):

“One of the most important issues in improving the competitive environment is the withdrawal of the state from economic activities and its emphasis on regulation and supervision functions. In this framework, our government does not see privatization practices only as a source of income for the public, but also as an important policy tool that will increase productivity and employment in production”.

In the program of the Third Erdogan Government, which was established between 06/07/2011 and 28/08/2014, Erdoğan stated that they made the biggest modernization move after the establishment of the republic and that they will continue their reformist practices. In particular, he presented the goal of membership to the European Union as the most important part of the aforementioned modernization move. (TBMM Tutanak Dergisi, 08/07/2011: 81):

“We have resolutely carried out and are continuing the process of our country's accession to the European Union, which is the biggest modernization move after the establishment of the republic. Although the approaches of some European Union countries that are far from objective criteria negatively affect the process, we sincerely continue our work on harmonization with European Union standards. We believe that the reforms, economic development and active foreign policy that we will continue in the upcoming period will carry the relations between the European Union and Turkey to the point they should be. Time will work in our country's favour”.

In the Third Government program that Erdogan presented to the parliament, the principles of pluralism and freedom, which are known among the principles of liberalism, were frequently included (TBMM Tutanak Dergisi, 08/07/2011: 82):

“We will continue to follow our National Unity and Fraternity Project in order to establish pluralist and libertarian democracy more deeply and to glorify our brotherhood.

Our goal is to create an environment in which every individual will realize their fundamental rights and freedoms at the highest level”.

As in the first three government programs, some promises based on economic liberalism were included in the fourth government program. In the program of the Third Erdogan Government, it was stated that they will continue to advocate for free capital movements and trade. It was also emphasized that the floating exchange rate regime would continue (TBMM Tutanak Dergisi, 08/07/2011: 86). These rhetoric and promises show that the Third Erdogan Government wants to adapt to the global economic system and will adopt economic liberalism to achieve this.

Conclusion

The most important subject of politics is undoubtedly political power. Political powers are institutions that have authority over the rules that regulate people's lives. Political powers can affect every area in which the individual or society exists in terms of social, political, economic and even cultural aspects. In today's democratic political systems, the political power, which has the power to rule over the people, must convince the society, in other words, get its legitimacy from the people. In this case, the programs and promises of governments come to the fore. Especially in representative democracies and parliamentary government systems, there is a condition that the government should get its legitimacy from both the people and the deputies elected by the people in order to be formed. Accordingly, in order for governments to be formed, it is essential that the prime minister determines his own government, prepares a government program, and obtains the approval of the government program to be presented to the parliament. The most important policy document here is the government program.

Turkey has been among the countries with a strong parliamentary system tradition since the 1876 Constitution. One of the most powerful periods of power in Turkey, which is generally governed by coalition governments, has taken place under the rule of the Ak Party. Ak Parti is a political party that comes from the National Vision tradition and calls itself conservative. By adding the adjective democrat to its conservative identity, Ak Parti has often claimed to be a "conservative democrat". Ak Party's references to the conservative democratic identity have been included in many documents and discourses of the party. On the other hand, this study, which examines the Ak Party's four different government programs covering the years 2002-2015, revealed that liberal discourse and promises were given wider space than the party's identity.

AK Party governments frequently included the discourses and policies of economic liberalism based on the market economy, as well as the libertarian discourses of political liberalism. Ak Party did not include any principle of conservatism ideology in four different government programs. On the other hand, he frequently mentioned the emphasis on individual freedoms, market economy, reforms and modernization in government programs. Ak Party's government programs include the arguments of a liberal political party. Therefore, although he calls himself a conservative-democrat, the party's principles in the government program are closer to liberalism between 2002 and 2015.

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